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THE SHANE QUARTERLY

HOLBROOK PACIFIC SCHOOL OF RELIGION

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The policy of the SHANE QUARTERLY shall be to present the trend of contemporary thought and practice, the results of investigation, general discussion, and book reviews and annotations in the field of religion.

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INTRODUCTION

The Shane is happy and privileged to present, in the January and April issues, articles originally given as addresses at a Disciples of Christ Study Conference on Ecumenical Issues. The conference was held at Chicago in August, 1954, just before the Evanston Assembly of the World Council.

Disciples of Christ must, in these times, be deeply concerned with the questions and problems of ecumenicity. Hence, a conference of representative Disciples leaders, devoted to a concerned attention to these problems, assumes definite importance. *The Shane Quarterly,* therefore, considers the presentation of these articles as a means of rendering a significant service to the Disciples of Christ and others who are interested in what Disciples are thinking about ecumenical matters.

These articles begin with a general discussion of the nature of the Church, the historical backgrounds of the Disciples and the nature and mission of the latter, move to the problems faced by Disciples on the missions fields, turn to a consideration of Disciples and co-operation in interdenominational affairs and in the congregation. There is a consideration of the problems faced in mergers of churches, and, finally, a summary of the findings of the Conference and suggestions about a Brotherhood program.

The discussions have been edited, in some areas, in the light of recent developments since last summer and in view of the fact that they needed preparation for publication. We are greatly indebted to the contributors of these issues for permission to use the articles, and to Mr. Robert Tobias, secretary of the Conference, for very helpful and generous assistance in readying them for publication.

The contributors in the January issue are: *Robert Tobias,* Director of the Disciples Committee on Ecumenical Fellowship and Service and Assistant Professor of Christian Doctrine and Church History in the School of Religion, Butler University; *H. H. Walz,* Associate Director of the Ecumenical Institute, World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland; *William G. West,* Minister of the First Christian Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society; *Virgil A. Sly,* Chair-

man of the Foreign Division of the United Christian Missionary Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Other contributors will be introduced in the April issue of *The Shane Quarterly.*

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST STUDY CONFERENCE ON ECUMENICAL ISSUES

By

ROBERT TOBIAS

FROM August 6 to August 9, 1954, 130 Disciples of Christ leaders—pastors, laymen, laywomen, students, missionaries, executives, professors—came together in Chicago for three days of intensive study on the nature and mission of the Disciples movement in relation to the ecumenical movement.

The Conference was sponsored by the "Committee on Ecumenical Fellowship and Service." The Disciples Divinity House and the University Church of Disciples of Christ were hosts to the Conference.

The purpose of the Conference was not to make pronouncements or pass resolutions. It was rather to consider where we stand and what direction Disciples might take in relation to their ecumenical calling.

The agenda centered around three considerations:

1. The nature of the Church and the mission and message of Disciples in an ecumenical perspective.
2. The Disciples mission and the Disciples younger churches, missions, and union churches.
3. Making the ecumenical movement a reality at home.

Each major topic was introduced by an address or panel and commentary, followed by free discussion.

In the final session the secretary of the Conference summarized what he felt to be salient "findings" of the Conference. Persons present, through their Churches and Agencies, have already initiated action on several "findings" of the Conference. Others were already engaged in effective unity programs. It is our hope that those who read these reports may wish to join them in whatever ways are possible in the ecumenical enterprise.

The sponsors of the Study Conference are greatly indebted to *The Shane Quarterly* for its kindness in publishing these extensive portions of the Conference material.

ROBERT TOBIAS
Conference Secretary

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THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

By

H. H. Walz

I. The Importance of the Subject and the Need for a a New Approach to It

REGARDING our subject, "The Nature of the Church," two apparently contradictory observations have to be made first. It is not a low church man but one of the most well-known theologians of the Roman Church on the Continent who has said: "The Church existed for about 1500 years without reflecting upon its nature and without attempting its clarification by a logical conception" (Bartmann, *Kath. Dogm.* II, 137). The fifteen hundred years during which the Church did not develop what we now so conveniently call an ecclesiology were the years before the Reformation. Since that time many attempts have been made both by Catholics and Protestants to give a doctrinal definition of the Church. But one may even go a step further and declare with Father Florovsky that all these attempts which meanwhile have been made belong more to the School than to the Church; that is to say, they do not represent more than the opinion of a group of scholars within given churches. The question, "What is the Church?" has become therefore a matter for theological debate among scholars rather than the subject of an overall church course. Another eminent Roman Catholic states frankly that until the present day the Church has not defined herself in any formal sense (R. Groscha). This, I think, is true of almost every church.

On the other hand, in the last thirty years no single subject of theology has occupied the minds of the ablest theologians more than the nature of the Church. Let us look for a moment into the reasons for this ever increasing interest in the Church.

One reason is the plight of individualism, both secular and religious, which could not come to grips with the realities of our age. The totalitarian state in Germany, for example, and in the German-occupied countries during the war was resisted not so much in the name of the individual Christian conscience as in the name of the Church. The individual can be managed in some way or other by those in power. The Church is a body which by its very existence does not fit in any totalitarian concept. It is in this context that the phrase was coined: "Let the Church be the Church." This did not

mean, as it was misinterpreted later, a withdrawal of the Church from its political and social responsibilities to a neat preoccupation with purely ecclesiastical matters. Rather, it signifies that if only the Church were truly what it ought to be, it would be an explosive force blowing up every attempt on the part of the State to close its universe without God.

Another reason why the Church came into the foreground is a new sense of the necessity for community life as essential to human life and a new awareness of the need for spiritual authority in the ordering of our confused lives and minds.

Along with all this there was the rediscovery of the importance of the Church in the thought of the New Testament and early Christian writers and the relevance of many of their ideas to our own problems.

Finally, the ecumenical movement, which in its origins was anything but church-minded, has revealed the overarching importance of the concept of the Church more through its actual development than through purposeful intuition. It has made us conscious of the fact that the concept of Churches, meaning by that Christian denominations, is incompatible with the concept of the Church as it is held in the New Testament. At the same time the ecumenical movement was driven to demonstrate that the problems of the unity of the Church cannot be solved only by the good will of individual Christians. The Churches must commit themselves to the solution of this problem which if solved will lead to the disappearance of the Churches as denominations. Volumes have been written on the Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches—this is the title of the famous Toronto declaration of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches—; on the Nature of the Church—this was the subject of a comprehensive study of the Faith and Order Commission to which the study and thought of hundreds of groups and individuals made a contribution—; on the origin of the Church in the Old Testament, in the teaching of our Lord and in the experience of the early Christians; on the Church's ministry, its mission and functions and its relation to the Kingdom of God; and finally on the concept of the Church as related to the concept of the Trinity.

I do not pretend to know more than, let us say, ten per cent of the literature which has been published on these subjects since the end of World War I. What I happen to know, however, is far too much to be presented even in the most general outline in the time at our disposal. Instead of making a futile attempt to cover everything I shall

emphasize certain aspects of the nature of the Church which in most of the literature which I know are largely overlooked. This negligence has contributed to the fact that at present the theological and the sociological understanding of the Church are divorced from each other so that both theological and sociological definitions are defective in themselves. The sociological facts about the Church and the Churches need to be understood in the dimension of theological categories. What theology in its turn needs to understand and evaluate is not so much its shadowy conceptual offspring born from an act of self-impregnation as the sociological data. These data represent themselves as God's mighty acts, although mediated through the horrors of human sin and the mediocrities of human obedience. Christian theology is grounded in the fact that God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. Sociology and all other sciences, on the other hand, have their motive power in the assumption that what can be known about them has to be found by untiring human effort and no God will reveal anything in these fields.

Now it is precisely in the area of tension between the revealed and the explorable that the nature of the Church must be found, and it must be understood in theological terms why this is so. Because the Church has an empirical side which is subject to changes in time and place it cannot easily be defined once and for all. Yet, so far, theology has failed to recognize the significance of this situation. Instead, the Church became the object of sometimes wild theological speculation which is controlled neither by sound doctrine nor by sober facts.

A simple phrase such as "the Church is the people of God," shows the dilemma in which we are. On the one hand, this is certainly biblical language; on the other, we must ask, what does it actually say? Is "people" here a purely theological term which cannot be explained by analogy with various sociological usages of the word? Or is it sociological and then what are its marks? To put the same question in other words: is the expression "people of God," as used for the Church, an image or a reality? The question becomes even more vexing when applied to other biblical expressions for the Church, such as the Body of Christ. An answer to these questions cannot be given before the nature of the Church in relation to the world has been clarified on theological grounds. What I am attempting to do here is a step in this direction.

First, I shall have to speak about the nature of the Church as constituted by its relationship with the world. Secondly, we shall

consider the nature of the Church as qualified by its mission to the world. Finally, we shall say a few words about the nature of the Church as witnessed to in the life of the congregation and its individual members.

II. The Nature of the Church as Constituted by its Relationship with the World

The Church cannot possibly be conceived in static terms. This has often been said and rightly so. We must go still a step further. The Church cannot be understood in itself. In fact, it is nothing in itself. It exists only in relationship with the world and its existence is its nature.

This is important. Hidden in our minds there is so often a Platonic conception as if the Church were an ideal entity, perfect in itself, corrupted only later when entering into the malicious world of our daily realities. In such way the nature and the existence of the Church are divorced. In biblical thought, however, the nature of the Church is its history, not its idea.

Now the history of the Church goes far back. We are accustomed to think that the history of the Church begins with the teaching and the ministry, death and resurrection of our Lord. There is a sense in which this true. Yet, the Christian churches themselves are part of a greater history, the history of salvation, that is to say, the history of God's saving purpose as expressed in certain acts of which we know by divine self-disclosure or revelation. In this history of salvation the Church goes back beyond the days of Jesus' ministry, it goes back to the prophets, the kings and the priests of the Old Testament, it goes back to the holy remnant, left during the days of widespread apostasy, to the people of the Sinai Covenant and to the patriarchs. It is not necessary to give biblical evidence for the fact that this is the manner in which the early teachers of Christianity looked at the Church. It suffices to recall that the very word Church (*ekklēsia*) is the Greek rendering for *qahal* which in the Old Testament signifies the people of God. Everybody knows how the dignifying words applied to the Sinai people "you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:6)," were taken up in the New Testament and applied to the New Israel which was the Church.

But the history of the Church goes still further back than Abraham. It goes back to Creation and even beyond the actual existence of our world. "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the

world" (Eph. 1:4). This may seem a strange speculation to many of us, but in fact it is a quite sober though all-important statement about the nature of the Church as being constituted by its relationship to the world already in the purpose of God. I do not think that Karl Barth is right in contending that in God's intuition the Church is primary and the world only secondary and that it is on behalf of the Church that the world was created. I rather think that from the very beginning Church and world are related to one another in such a way that theologically speaking neither could exist without the other. They have their very nature not in themselves but in their relationship. The history of the Church is the history of God's saving purpose and this purpose would really be purposeless if it were not directed toward the world. It is therefore—to say the least—utterly misleading when Edwin Lewis (in *A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation*) says: "A primal creative act brought the world into being. A second primal creative act brought the Church into being." This leads in the end to a sectarian conception of the Church.

The intimate interrelationship which exists between Church and world becomes manifest also when the Bible speaks about the end of time as we know it. It is obvious that only images can be used to describe things which by their nature are beyond the power of human imagination. The new state of things is called the resurrection from the dead, the Kingdom of God, or the new heaven and the new earth. It is never called the new Church, however. The reason is that the very concept of the Church is so much bound up with the world, the world as we know it, the created and also the sinful world, the explorable world of which I have spoken, that when this world has come to an end, as Christians believe it will come, it makes no sense to speak of the Church any longer.

I have suggested that the nature of the Church is its history, a history which begins, so to speak, in the moment in which the world comes into being and which ends with the end of this world. What now is the nature of the Church between these two point events of which we can talk only in mythological language? Is there not a sharp distinction, even a complete separation of Church and world, and does not the Bible frequently warn us that we should not mix the two things? There is no question that in a very real sense the Church has to be not only distinguished but even separated from the world, but I contend that even this separation can only be understood Biblically in the framework of basic relatedness. The Church must do everything,

whether it cooperates with the world or it retires from the world, on behalf of the world if it does not want to cease to be the Church. A Church which thinks of itself as being a self-sufficient community of those who have been saved regardless of what happens to the rest of mankind and to the whole universe is some sort of mystery cult but not the Christian Church.

The Church is universal in character not only because its limits are not confined to a certain race or nation but because intentionally the whole universe is envisaged in every particular act of the Church. Such particular acts which represent the whole are: two or three gathering together in Christ's name, a congregation worshiping by word and sacrament, a church rendering some kind of social service to a group of people or a nation. In confessing our sins to God we confess the sins of human kind, in receiving forgiveness we receive God's universal grace. It is for that reason that "sinfulness belongs to the very nature of the Church," as Emil Brunner has once remarked (*Divine Imperative,* p. 526).

There is a Latin phrase which expresses best the basic relationship of the Church to the world in the period limited by the fall of man at the one end and the consummation in glory at the other. In that period the Church is the *pars pro toto* in respect of the world. I do not know how to render this expression into proper English. What I mean is that the Church represents the world in its unworthiness and disobedience, in its being punished, that is to say being forsaken by God, in its being restored time and again and being connected with the source of life apart from which we must die, in its adoration of God's glorious name when it joins with the heavenly hosts and in its hope—quite particularly in its hope. The Church must not confess Christ as its hope if it does not mean by that that Christ is the hope of the world, as the main theme for Evanston runs. In Abraham, who has always been understood as one of the great symbols of the people of God or the Church, all generations shall bless themselves. The suffering servant of Second Isaiah, another such symbol, is told that "it is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach the end of the earth." In the rich and meaningful symbolism of the Eastern Orthodox Church it is made quite clear that those who happen to celebrate the Holy Liturgy together in a given church building are in that moment representing not only the Church universal over all places and ages but also the whole world.

I do not know whether I have made my point sufficiently clear. I have to struggle all the time with two language difficulties; the one is my incapability of expressing myself freely in English; the other is the incapability of all our modern Western languages which think in spatial and positional terms to express a relationship in action where two things may be inclusive of one another without being identical, and where, as we still shall see, the relation from one to the other is irreversible because it is a historical movement. I may close this section therefore with a word in more traditional though highly technical language. It has been emphasized in recent years by many scholars who have co-operated in the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches that ecclesiology, *i.e.,* the doctrine of the Church, should be brought into the most intimate contact with Christology, *i.e.,* the doctrine of the nature of Christ. I think that this intention is worth every support. I should like to add, however, that only if Christology is rewritten in soteriological terms, *i.e.,* terms taken from the work of Christ or the history of salvation, can the doctrine of the Church gain new depth and more reality from this process.

III. The Nature of the Church as Qualified by Its Mission to the World

Speaking now about the mission of the Church, I do not want to suggest the traditional distinction between the Church's nature and its mission. In fact, I think that this distinction implies one of the most damaging errors in the conception of the Church. If the church first has a certain nature, independent of what it is doing and, secondly, gets a certain mission, independent of what it is, the door is open to all kinds of strange activities and unlawful inactivities for which the present life of most of our Churches provides abundant illustration. The nature and the mission of the Church are one and the same thing, because, as we have seen already, the Church is the incarnation of God's saving purpose for the world. What has been said so far about the nature of the Church, namely its basic relatedness to the world would, however, be incomplete and perhaps even misleading if we did not add a certain qualification to it. Therefore we have now to speak about the mission of the Church.

The Church is not simply related to the world, but it is related to it in a certain way. The Church is sent to the world. "As the father has sent me, even so I send you" (John 20:21). This is the foundation of the Church and therefore the Church, by its very nature, is the Apostolic Church, the Church sent. Thereby, and only thereby, the

Church participates in the nature of Christ Himself because He is the envoy, the sent one par excellence. Thus He prays: "As thou didst send me into the world, so have I sent them into the world" (John 17:18). The Church is the more Christlike, the more it directs itself to the world.

Here I must insert a word about the ecumenical movement. Its aim is a clearer manifestation of the essential unity of the Church. The Churches which have joined the World Council of Churches are agreed that this aim cannot be pursued merely by negotiations between the existing churches with a view to merging or to uniting. The unity which is the goal of the ecumenical movement cannot be the result of a compromise among the existing church bodies. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not leave us and our Churches unchanged. Unity can only be brought about by the renewal of each individual church body. The Faith and Order Commission has well said in the name of their churches: only as we draw nearer to Christ we draw nearer to one another. Now, how do we draw nearer to Christ? By taking seriously our mission to the world, by realizing that we are sent even as he was sent. The renewal of the Church is not an indoor process whereby some repairs in the decoration of the church are made. The renewal of the Church is the renewal of its mission to the world, its responsibility for the world.

I am convinced that in our days God Himself has begun to renew the Church by driving it out of the secure corners of a pious life of its own and thrusting it into the perplexities and dilemmas, the temptations and the depressions of the modern world. I know what I am saying here. The renewal of the Church which is the prerequisite of the ecumenical movement is not an easy thing. It is not a few theologians or church leaders sitting together and having some nice ideas. It is not masses of laymen and laywomen activized in the service of the Church. It is not assemblies like that at Evanston. All this may be of some value, and it is the only thing which we can do in regard to the renewal of the Church for the time-being. At its best, however, this is a preparation for something else. It lies on the same level as the movement to reform the clergy in the twelfth, the lay movements of the fourteenth, and the conciliar movement of the fifteenth century. They all helped to prepare the way. But the real renewal came only with the storm of the Reformation when the old Church was threatened with death and eventually broken into pieces, and not everybody who had a share in the preparatory events took part in the final thing.

The renewal of the Church which I think is imminent to our generation means that our churches, church activities and church assemblies must change to the point of dying as the grain of wheat must die in order to bear fruit. The ecumenical movement, and even more so the World Council of Churches, is not a fulfillment. It is a preparer of the way, not more. But this is its honor as it was the honor of John the Baptist who baptized the people for the repentance of their sins.

If we speak as we must of the mission of the Church in these radical terms and if we remember that the Church's mission is its very nature then we see that the Church is not an institution but a process, a sequence of point events in time. This process is always directed toward the world. But it takes different facets: sometimes it pours into the world, filling every phase of a certain civilization, but then the danger is near of its losing its distinct characteristics. At another time it forms a concentrated and even exclusive minority group which is a sign pointing to the open sky as up against the totalitarian tendencies of a certain age or civilization. But then the Church is in danger of becoming self-sufficient and even self-complacent. At all events, as long as it is the Church it has to die for the sake of the world to which it is sent and whose life depends on the dying of the Church in its midst. This death takes many forms according to time and place. Essentially, however, it follows a twofold pattern: the Church fulfills its mission if it dies away from its conformity with the world, thereby protesting against the spirit of a certain age to which itself it has been subject, and the Church dies away from its sectarian separatedness from the world thereby giving itself wholeheartedly to the needs and joys of the people testifying that God has so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

In this way, death is the law of the life of the Church. We cannot develop the theological implications of this insight; it must suffice to remark that they are bound up with the soteriological character of the doctrine of the Church. Only in passing, however, I should like to mention that from here new light is thrown on the sociological question of the Church. It is now clear, I should think, that because of its very nature the Church appears in various sociological forms, such as a gathering, a foundation, an association, a movement, an institution, a state church, a free church or a people's church, in the Old Testament even a nation, and in the Middle Ages a community of nations or a civilization. But in the moment when the Church takes

on these sociological forms they are doomed to die, or, more precisely, the Church must eventually die away from them and will therefore leave them in the end as empty stereotypes.

Therefore, although the Church exists at no time without some such form, no such form may ever claim to be the Church or the ideal and once-and-for-all vessel of the Church. Although at any time the Church is visible on earth it is always hidden from the eyes of those who look for it in terms of organization. Time does not permit to show how from this point of view theology and sociology could join in writing the history of the Church. The Church is there where this process of death and rebirth takes place. But remember—death means the end. It must not be taken as a means to rebirth. Otherwise dying becomes a trick to save one's life. And whoever and in whatever form would save his life will lose it (Matt. 16:25). This is the temptation of a Church that knows its Bible and its theology so well that it forgets how dreadful a thing it is "to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). The mission of the Church is not a reason for pride and self-assurance on the part of the Church but for fear and self-abandonment.

IV. The Nature of the Church as Witnessed to by the Life of the Christian Community and the Individual Christian

Not much time is left and indeed not much needs to be said if one thing is clear: either the nature of the Church as related to the world becomes manifest in the life of our Christian communities or we are simply not the Church. In this case we are somthing else, perhaps something very decent and respectable, perhaps an association of Jesus worshipers or an organization for the promotion of human relations and higher moral standards, but not the Church.

Three tendencies, at least, which are prominent in much of the church life of which I know are incompatible with the nature of the Church as we have described it. The first is a certain kind of institutionalism which assumes that the first task of the Church is to be well established or well run. Europeans usually think more of establishing their Church, Americans perhaps more of running their Church, but virtually it is the same thing. In both cases the Church is taken as an end in itself, a danger which lurks particularly in the minds of us clergy and all ecclesiastical officials: the church program must be attractive, the church building comfortable and the church service beautiful. A similar attitude is reflected in the minds of many laymen,

especially those whom the parson would call fine Christians and devout laymen. They know that they have to earn their living in the secular world and they do it either with blushing timidity or with ruthless matter-of-factness. But it is in church that they are exalted to higher spheres. Here they find an outlet for their better self in singing and praying, in lay preaching and ushering, in raising money and selling pamphlets. It is in the service of the Church that they feel they are Christians. And to be a Christian means for them to be organized in the service of the Church. This is ecclesiasticism which by implication denies the true nature of the Church. It is introvert Christianity turning the Christian faith into a religion instead of realizing that it is a mission. It is like carving an arrow which is perfect in every respect except that it cannot be shot. Christianity must be lived not in the Church but in the world. The church organization is a means to that end, not more. That is not minimizing the task of the organized Church. With the wide world in mind the organized Church has enough to do.

The second danger which paralyzes the life of many of our best and most active churches is very much akin to the first one, except that here a relation to those outside the life of the Church is established. But it is the wrong kind of relation. I should like to call it proselytism. Proselytism looks at the Church as an association which needs to be made powerful by the enlargement of its membership. It looks at the people outside the Church as potential converts. It wants to bring as many people as possible into the four walls of the Church and it does not question for a moment that the Church is really there where its banner flies. It has never thought of bringing the Church to the people so that the Church may become part of their lives, instead of making the people part of the life of the Church. To these eager evangelists people are numbers, objects, not fellow human beings with whom we live in solidarity of human need and sin. Connected with this proselytism is often a deathbed theology. By that I mean the exploitation of human needs for spiritual purposes. Much of our traditional apologetic theology is deathbed theology. Men are shown that they cannot solve their problems, *e.g.,* the problem of atomic war, and, therefore, the argument goes, they need a God. That is all very wonderful, except that Christians cannot solve the problem of the atomic war either and that Christ came to the rescue of men not only when they were at their worst, but even more when they were at their best. I have no time to go into this but I wish you would help me to

think about the question of whether we preachers can go on presenting God as the panacea for all human problems instead of presenting him as the Lord who makes us suffer more deeply, who makes us be less sure of ourselves than others and yet live more gratefully.

My third point is clericalism. By clericalism I do not mean the rule of clergy in the Church over against laity. This is a problem, but a relatively innocent one which can be solved as the clergy becomes more acquainted with the daily lives of laymen and laymen become more acquainted with the elements of Christian faith and doctrine. Clericalism, as I use the term here, means the attempt of a religious minority group to govern public life by its principles. This is perhaps one of the most subtle temptations befalling the Church time and again, and I mention it here because it could seem as if precisely this was meant by the mission of the Church to the world. Contrary to the dangers of institutionalism and proselytism, here the Church throws itself into the life of the world, it directs its message to the world and it takes responsibility for the world. Is it not simply wonderful when Christians make the public obey Christian rules such as Sabbath observance, abstention from alcoholic beverages, prohibition of divorce? No, this is not wonderful. It is falling into the third temptation of ruling the world which Jesus resisted. How can Christians ever believe that what may come as a fruit of the Holy Spirit could be enforced by legal measures of a state where those who really hold these convictions are only a minority? You may answer: it is for their own good that people are forced to live up to Christian standards. It is the Communists who impose upon people their own good. God does not force people to love him although it would be better for them to do so. Christians have no commandment to rule the world. But they have the commandment to serve their neighbors and to love even their enemies. Service does not mean to establish worthy principles but to help other persons at the very place where they are. Love does not force but it persuades. Such love which gives itself defenselessly to those who do not know what love is is the true fulfillment of the nature of the Church. It is dying and rising with Christ.

A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE ORIGIN, NATURE, AND MISSION OF THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

By

William Garrett West

AT THE outset I want to make it clear that this does not purport to be a definitive survey of the above subject. My own belief is that, until further historical work is done by not one but a number of historians, and until more source materials are studied with greater objectivity, a complete history of the Disciples of Christ cannot be written. In 1900 W. T. Moore published *A Comprehensive History of the Disciples of Christ.* It was a good work for its day, but had a number of limitations. W. E. Garrison, the dean of our historians, in 1900 published *Alexander Campbell's Theology,* which is a landmark in historical interpretation among us. In 1931 he published *Religion Follows The Frontier,* another notable work, which stressed the influence of the frontier on the Disciples of Christ. It divided our history into convenient periods, brought the later period of our history up-to-date and emphasized that the Disciples of Christ, or Christian churches, are not to be tied to the past, but are to explore new fields of thought and activity. In 1948 Garrison and A. T. DeGroot wrote *The Disciples of Christ: A History,* which is another excellent history, although the authors were not able to utilize some more recent scholarly studies. The majority of our historical works have been, in the main, a rewriting of what has been done previously, with little emphasis on a study of the source materials themselves. This is no reflection on the busy ministers and teachers who have not had the time or financial support for a thorough study of the materials available.

Professor Roland Bainton of Yale once remarked that the average minister or teacher, with the heavy schedule the majority carry, is able to produce only about one good monograph in a lifetime. When I think of my own time schedule, I am beginning to wonder if I shall ever be able, in the next twenty-five years, to produce one scholarly monograph.

The Disciples of Christ Historical Society is only about thirteen years old. It is doing an excellent work with pitifully inadequate support, but it is growing, and we have high hopes that it will be able to make it possible for our young scholars to do more adequate historical work.

A number of first rate historical studies have been recently finished. Four have been completed on Alexander Campbell within the last ten years in one seminary. I refer to the doctoral dissertations done by Harold L. Lunger, D. Ray Lindley, Granville Walker, and Fred West at Yale University. A fascinating subject is now being studied by C. K. Thomas of Princeton University. The title of his dissertation has not been definitely formulated, but it is on the work of Alexander Campbell as a biblical scholar. This study will help us not merely to make generalizations about Alexander Campbell's worth as a student of the Bible, but we shall actually be able to see the evidence which will grow out of a scholarly comparison of Campbell's work with other translations. We shall learn what in Campbell's translation is original and what is not. My own guess is that Campbell, as a result of this study, will emerge with a greater reputation than he now has in the field of biblical interpretation. This is only one example of many works which still need to be done in this historical field.

Further, let us take, as another example, this whole matter of sectional or state histories of the Disciples of Christ. Many histories of our people at the state level have not yet been written, and of those that have been a number fall short of factual objectivity and competence. J. Edward Moseley has produced an excellent history of the Disciples of Christ in Georgia, and I hope will be able to write a history of our work in Tennessee. One group of Disciples historians would hold that until our state and sectional histories are written, we cannot have a complete history of our people. In other words, we have hardly scratched the surface of historical study in our Brotherhood.

Some will question whether, in a hydrogen or cobalt bomb age, all this is worth doing. Perhaps it may not be. Certainly, few students studying for a B.D. degree will have the time or patience to do good work on the many source materials which are available. But there are an abundance of material and no lack of subjects for any students who wish to make some aspect of the historical study of the Disciples one of their disciplines.

Today we are forced to make generalizations on the basis of the work already done, realizing, at the same time, that some of our interpretations in the past have, in all probability, been inadequate. My own feeling is that we have at times overemphasized the role of Alexander Campbell; indeed, Curator Claude E. Spencer, of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, begins his lectures on our history by stating that it has been written from the Campbellian point of view, primarily because Campbell's works are more easily accessible than

others. We have also neglected to study the real influence of some of our first and second generation Disciples, and we have yet to relate our history adequately to other denominations. Sometimes I feel that, in seeking to explain our uniqueness, our so-called liberals, as well as conservatives, have actually in effect divorced us from the centuries of faith since New Testament times.

I have been asked to give an analytical presentation of the origin, nature, and mission of the Disciples of Christ. What, basically, brought us into being? Was there anything distinctive in our denomination? Were we a movement, a sect, an association, an institution? Have we been ecumenical, confessional, sectarian, evangelistic? What questions have we failed to face up to?

This is, indeed, a large order, greater than I can fill. Let me, very briefly, outline our origin on American soil without going back to all of the influences, on the continent and in Scotland, which influenced some of our early leaders.

The Disciples of Christ, or Christian churches, are rooted in strong personalities and in movements for Christian unity in various areas of our country some 150 years ago.

One movement arose in Virginia when James O'Kelly, Rice Haggard, and other Methodists in that state rebelled in 1792 against the authoritarian concept of the church held by Bishop Francis Asbury. A year later they organized the Republican Methodist Church. Several months later, meeting in Surrey County, Virginia, they adopted as their name "The Christian Church." Taking the Bible as their creed, they based their primary dissent from the Methodist Church on their feeling that "primitive church government" was a republic by nature. Some of these Christian Churches later joined ranks with the followers of Thomas and Alexander Campbell and with the followers of Barton W. Stone. Others united with the Congregationalists in 1930.

Another movement began in New England when two young men protested against Calvinism in the Baptist Churches there. One was Elias Smith, a Baptist who was born in 1769 in Lyme, Connecticut, and the other was Abner Jones, born in 1772 in Royalton, Massachusetts. Both men renounced Calvinism and favored a movement to abandon existing ecclesiastical systems and to establish a simpler faith and practice of the New Testament. Smith and Jones worked together and dozens of "Christian" churches, resulting from their work, sprang up in New England.

Still another movement, of greater significance, originated in Kentucky. Barton W. Stone, born in the same year as Abner Jones,

1772, at Port Tobacco, Maryland, was its primary leader. In company with some fellow Presbyterian ministers, Stone and his fellow ministers withdrew from the jurisdiction of the Synod of Kentucky. They organized an independent Springfield Presbytery in 1803, but less than a year later they dissolved the Presbytery they had created. They published a *Last Will and Testament* in which they pleaded for more lay rule in church matters, a firmer reliance on the Bible as a guide, and union with the "Body of Christ" at large. They adopted the name "Christian" at the suggestion of Rice Haggard whose recently discovered pamphlet, *An Address to the Different Religious Societies on the Sacred Import of the Christian Name,* is not only a defense of the use of the name Christian, but contains an attack against the pride which permits the existence of competing churches and also a plea for primitive Christianity as a basis of Christian unity.

The *Last Will and Testament* is a brief document which is not to be compared with the *Declaration and Address* of Thomas Campbell. The former is primarily dramatic in character. However, the beliefs of this group are outlined in the *Witness' Address,* and in another little read document entitled *Observations on Church Government,* published by Richard McNemar in 1807. At the moment let me make only the observation that there is a strong note in these documents on the deep spiritual foundations necessary for the unity of the New Testament Church and all later churches. These three documents, which should be read and interpreted together, were published two years before the historic *Declaration and Address.* That Thomas Campbell had them before him when he wrote the *Declaration and Address* is improbable, but many of the ideas in the three and in the Campbell document are the same. In both sets two threads predominate. These are a strong plea for the unity of the church and the necessity for abandoning human creeds and returning to the Bible. In the writings of the Stone group there is naturally a stronger statement against creeds and the doctrines of a hardened Calvinism, and there is a slightly less emphasis on a New Testament model church than is found in the *Declaration and Address.*

The Stone movement spread quite rapidly, especially in Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana. It also invaded Tennessee, Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa, and, indeed, the correspondents in Stone's periodical, the *Christian Messenger,* reported successful meetings in many other states. One of the most amazing reports of all was published in the *Christian Palladium,* a periodical which at that time had reason to report otherwise if it possibly could. In this report one correspondent, affiliated with the New England Christians and writing from Kentucky, reported

that in nine months there had been some 3,000 additions to the Stone movement in Kentucky.

For fourteen years Barton W. Stone edited the *Christian Messenger;* in it he quoted much from other magazines, but also expressed his own views with a remarkable lack of rigidity. In its pages is reflected a flaming desire for the unity of the Christian community.

For awhile after the break with the orthodox Presbyterians, Stone was forced to prove that he was not a heretic. Knowing well that if charges were proved he would be unable to have much influence in the movement for Christian unity, Stone defended himself against the assertions that he was an infidel, a rationalist, a Socinian, and a Unitarian. He believed that his Christology, or position on the nature and work of Christ, was higher than the orthodox belief.

Stone assigned a subordinationist role to Christ, but placed him above the created world. He was neither fully God nor fully man, but he was above all other creatures. Stone did not believe that the death of Christ influenced God, but, rather, exerted a moral influence in changing man from rebellion to obedience to God. The extreme hardened type of Calvinism began to soften in Kentucky about 1825. Beyond old extreme theological concepts and commitment to theories of new groups, such as Shakers, Stone never lost sight of the basic dream of Christian unity born at Cane Ridge when many denominations worked together in the Great Revival.

Neither Stone nor any of his contemporaries were committed to modern programs of ecumenical action. However, as he pointed out in 1836, very few in the American religious scene took the idea of Christian unity seriously around 1800, but in 1836 a tremendous shift had taken place in the religious climate, so that many people felt that Christian unity was at least desirable, although there was no effective implementation of the idea.

I am convinced that Barton W. Stone was one of the most significant of that small group of forerunners of our modern ecumenical movement in America. Dr. Luther A. Weigle of Yale states that Stone belongs with S. S. Schmucker and Philip Schaff "on the honored roll of nineteenth-century American religious leaders who had genuine ecumenical vision and devotion." [Editor's note: see the Introduction, by Weigle, to W. G. West, *Barton Warren Stone* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1954), p. xvi.]

What did Stone believe about Christian unity? First of all, his interest in unity was primarily practical rather than theoretical. Others, such as Henry Pattillo and James McGready, believed that disunity

was wrong, but accepted divisions as being inevitable within the framework of earthly existence.

He not only deplored divisions, he labored to overcome them. He provided leadership for the mergers of the Reformers (the Campbell movement) and the Christians at a time when Alexander Campbell still regarded it as being a matter for public debate. An examination of the pages of the *Millennial Harbinger* and the *Christian Messenger* reveals that Campbell believed that he possessed a fuller presentations of the primitive gospel than Stone. He took no active participation in the merger.

Stone was also convinced that religious debating, in a time when Americans loved political controversy, promoted strife and discouraged unity. "The strife of Christians," he once noted, "is the food of infidelity and the sport of hell." If his position had prevailed, the Disciples would be a more united people today.

Furthermore, Stone rejected dogmatic statements, no matter how biblical they professed to be, as bases of unity. He saw clearly the danger of rejecting written creeds and substituting in their place unwritten creeds. He opposed ecclesiastical heresy-hunting, a popular pastime in different periods of our history. Real heretics are not those who believe wrong doctrines, but those who do not have "the spirit of love and union with the whole body of Christ." This is a consistent theme running through the pages of the *Christian Messenger,* but more importantly, it was imbedded in the life of the pioneer ecumenically-minded man himself. This is not to imply that Stone was not a biblicist. He believed in returning to the Bible, but once he came back to the Bible, he was willing for Christians to have wide latitude in interpreting the Scriptures. Here is another emphasis, which if it had been followed, would have changed the course of our history.

Stone rejected the idea that Christian unity could be achieved through opposition to other movements such as the rising tide of Roman Catholicism. In an analysis of the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John, Stone asserted that the Father and Son are not one in *ousia,* or substance, but one in their redemptive work. When Christian believers identify themselves with the love of the Father which is reflected in the Son and engage in redemptive work, they become united with one another.

One of the most common themes in Stone's writings is that unity cannot exist in the Christian community without humility and Christian love. In Stone there is a Sermon-on-the-Mount emphasis on love. It was not "dramatics." Stone was the self-effacing type. He sub-

ordinated pride to such an extent that even his enemies acknowledged that in his lifetime he had acquired a reputation for sainthood.

Let us note that Stone was not only far ahead of his own time, but ahead of ours, in advocating an all inclusive fellowship. His basic ecumenical presupposition was that there is an underlying unity among all Christians regardless of their interpretations of Christian doctrine. Stone seemed to accept all who accepted Jesus as the Son of God. While neither an orthodox trinitarian nor an orthodox Unitarian, he was willing to accept both, if they believed that Jesus was the Son of God. In other words, he was committed to using Bible language, but once one accepted the Scriptures, he could adopt any one of many interpretations of the basic Christian doctrines, however heretical those positions may have been regarded in the past. His own Christological position was much closer to the Unitarian than the orthodox trinitarian position, but he rejected the name Unitarian. He also was willing to include in the Christian community the orthodox Calvinists.

Recently there has come some belated recognition of the so-called Stone movement, but Stone's importance in starting this movement or giving it direction has been questioned. Stone, it is maintained, gained leadership by "forfeit." Of the original group who left the Presbyterians in Kentucky, McNemar and Dunlavy went over to the Shakers; Thompson and Marshall went back to the Presbyterians, leaving Stone alone to assume leadership because he "survived."

Let me state that this does not detract from Stone's stature, for in this case it was a "survival of the fittest." Stone deserves great credit in standing alone when his colleagues deserted him. It must also be remembered that Stone was only twenty-four years of age when he went to Kentucky in 1796. In 1801 he was twenty-nine when he helped set in motion the train of events which issued in the Great Revival of 1801. He not only signed all of the documents which resulted in the formation of the Christian movement in Kentucky, but he was one of three men who were the authors of the historic *Apology,* one-third of which he wrote and which revealed his theological ability.

To be a leader in a great revival, which attracted some 20,000 or 25,000 persons; to have that revival take place in and around one's own church; to be one of five or six men signing important documents (for example, the *Last Will and Testament*); to help write the *Apology for Renouncing the Jurisdiction of the Synod of Kentucky*—all this is no small accomplishment for a relatively young man who had lived in a new state only a few years.

Moreover, Stone went beyond the Lunenburg letter of 1837 in which Alexander Campbell adopted a liberal position regarding the unimmersed. In the Lunenburg letter controversy, our sympathy is with Campbell, who tried to soften the attitude of the group of legalists who wanted to completely "fence out" the unimmersed from any kind of Christian fellowship. The fact remains, however, that a study of not just the letter itself, but the entire controversy, indicates that while Campbell gladly admitted that many of the unimmersed would in all probability be saved in heaven, he could not bring himself to give them the full hand of Christian fellowship in the earthly Christian community.

Sometimes I think that Campbell had the experience many of us have after we have preached a sermon in which we win a convert to our position. Following the sermon, the convert takes our hand and says, "Brother, that was a great sermon; it just fits my thinking." Then, to our consternation, he not only agrees with us, but goes so far beyond us, that it amounts to an almost different position from our own! Campbell had emphasized immersion so completely that some of his close followers became uncompromising legalists on every aspect of the baptismal question. Though the Lunenburg letter and later attendant comments were liberal, Campbell did not widen his doctrinal position to embrace the unimmersed as a part of the Christian fellowship on earth.

Though believing that immersion is Christian baptism, Stone stated again and again that the unimmersed should not be excluded from Christian fellowship. In the more than three hundred references he made to baptism in the *Christian Messenger,* he never once excluded the unimmersed from complete Christian fellowship. A man's position on doctrinal questions also has to be determined by his mood and the overtones sounded. The mood of Stone on baptism is one of conciliation and reasonableness. A number of times he placed interpretation of baptism as well as the Trinity in the realm not of required faith, but of opinion. When Stone tried to convince the Eastern, or New England, Christians that baptism was not to be disregarded, he seemed to lean toward Campbell's more strict position; when he tried to convince Campbell to moderate his position, he apparently leaned toward the more latitudinarian position held by the New England Christians. The overwhelming preponderance of his writings on baptism are free from dogmatism and emphasis upon the absolute necessity of immersion as a condition of salvation. He constantly enjoined some of his

followers, as well as the Reformers, to refrain from bitterness and controversy on the subject.

For Stone, unity was in the nature of a divine imperative. He urged fathers and mothers to teach Christian unity to their children. He urged all to sacrifice to make its achievement possible.

Though he was impatient because so little progress had been made toward Christian unity by 1836, Stone noted that great gains had been reached since 1800, when the idea of unity was first advanced in this country. In 1836 he reveled in an imaginary convention held in America to discuss the greatest subject to engage the attention of mankind—"the subject of Christian union." He was many years ahead of his time and ours. Dean Luther A. Weigle calls him a "grass roots practioneer" of Christian unity, and I am persuaded that his witness was a significant one in America, for he and a few others blazed a trail at a time when there was a wilderness of controversy and dissension in the American religious scene. Stone and his movement deserve more attention among our own Brotherhood and American church historians.

Another one of the "four horsemen" of the early days was Walter Scott, a Presbyterian, born in Scotland in 1796. He came to New York in 1818 and later migrated to Pittsburgh. Scott developed the famous "five-finger" exercise to outline the steps of conversion. He was a flaming evangelist whose marked success added thousands to the Disciples of Christ on the frontier.

All of us are familiar with what is probably the most important movement, or stream, which has helped to make us a denomination. Therefore, I shall be much briefer in considering Thomas and Alexander Campbell. Both were great men and I want to make it clear that I do not for one moment wish to attempt to add to Stone's stature by detracting from either of the Campbells.

Alexander Campbell, especially, was a distinguished administrator, educator, preacher, and scholar. He had a definite political theory, whereas, one of Stone's greatest weaknesses was that he was so devoid of political theory that he once stated that Christians should not even participate in elections.

When Thomas Campbell left the Seceder Presbyterian ministry, a group of friends met with him to form the "Christian Association of Washington" on August 17, 1809. Thomas Campbell drew up an important document called the *Declaration and Address*. Probably the most significant statement in that document is that "the church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one."

The address pictured the "awful effects of division among Christians" and trumpeted an impassioned plea for unity. The address stated that divisions have been caused by neglect of the revealed will of God, by human opinions, and by the introduction of human inventions into the faith and practice of the church. The address also stated that the New Testament is a perfect constitution for the "worship, discipline and government of the New Testament Church" and there are passages of moving force in the *Declaration,* the address, and the appendix sections which can be quoted today to reinforce the burning appeal of Thomas Campbell for the unity of the divided church. Unfortunately, there are likewise a few sentences and paragraphs which emphasize the divine original pattern and model of the New Testament Church and New Testament Christianity. Indeed, as I reread the *Declaration and Address* recently, I was startled to see how much stress was placed on the necessity of returning to New Testament primitivism as the means of restoring unity. In the *Declaration and Address* there is also an underlying mood of conciliation which, unfortunately, has been lost sight of in many periods of our history. It was a great document in 1809 and it is a great document today.

Alexander Campbell, as we all know, arrived in America in 1809 and agreed with his father's position. The Christian Association, which had originally called for a multiplicity of similar associations meeting twice a year, finally on May 4, 1811, organized itself into a church. Infant baptism and sprinkling were rejected by the group and this helped to bring them close to the Baptists.

Alexander Campbell fortunately achieved financial security through his marriage to the daughter of a well-to-do farmer. Campbell was a scholar. As a young man he wanted to excel in his studies, just as a modern American youth wishes to do well in football. He had great brilliance, and in the next seventeen years he engaged in a number of religious debates, travelled extensively, gave many addresses, and edited a religious periodical called the *Christian Baptist.* In this publication Mr. Campbell attacked the authority of the clergy, the use of creeds and unscriptural organizations such as synods, Bible societies, and Sunday schools. In criticizing the churches of his day with their corruptions, he used many of the arguments which the skeptics themselves had used against revealed religion. He also outlined characteristics of a primitive order of faith, practice, and worship which he felt was contained in the New Testament. Many Baptist churches were won over to Alexander Campbell's views, but other Baptists regarded this brilliant young religious leader as a heretic.

Lack of time robs me of the fascinating opportunity of following his career as a member of the Virginia constitutional convention, and as a debater with Robert Owen, the socialist, who is attracting some interest just now among commentators such as Marquis Childs. Then there were his debates with Archbishop Purcell and N. L. Rice. There is the interesting question of whether there are really two Alexander Campbells—one, an opposer; the other, a constructive builder, churchman, and administrator. I shall pass this by with only one comment; when it is held that there were two Campbells, one does not mean that Campbell was afflicted with schizophrenia, but rather that new light came to him, and with the passing of the years his attitudes matured and developed.

It is difficult to fix an exact date when the followers of Campbell departed from the Baptists, but 1830 is as good date as any to denote the final break. Following this separation from the Baptists came the far-reaching merger between the followers of Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell. Stone was the bolder of the two men in pressing for unity of the two groups. Campbell wished to clarify differences before the merger.

While Campbell in the *Millennial Harbinger* still called for theological discussion, the leaders of groups held meetings in 1832 which led to rapid mergers of congregations, so that by 1835 one can say that the majority of these two groups had come together. Barton W. Stone took an active part in promoting the merger, and the evidence indicates to me that there would probably have been no merger without his patience and work. Many of the "Christians" did not enter into the merger, though Stone labored long, patiently, and diligently to bring the followers of Campbell and the New England Christians together.

This new movement grew rapidly. The largest gains were made among the people moving into the new frontier states of the West. Many of these people had known of the "New Light," or Stone, movement in Kentucky. After the merger Alexander Campbell experienced some of his finest achievements. His leadership in the field of education, missionary endeavor, and organizational life in general helped to mold our people into institutional life; our growing vitality could not be expressed alone in preaching and publishing debates, pamphlets, and magazines.

There were four notable constructive developments which later took place in what W. E. Garrison calls the period of Renaissance, 1874-1900. These were: the growth of religious journalism, the

rebirth of missionary interest, the development of educational institutions, and the venture in the new field of interchurch co-operation.

Although too briefly outlined, this is a sketch of our origin which stresses in the main a few things from a slightly different point of view. Now let us discuss, even more briefly, our nature and mission.

I shall give brief answers to the questions which I have been asked to discuss, and then enumerate some of the problems we have never faced up to in our history.

1. What basically brought us into being?
   a) Reaction against a Calvinism that had become hardened and was no longer adaptable to conditions on the frontier. This Calvinism softened in many places around 1830, and thereafter did not present the same problem it did when the Campbells and Barton W. Stone reacted against it.
   b) A burning, intense, and deep conviction that divisive Christianity is sinful scandal.
   c) A belief that divisiveness in the Christian church is caused by overstress upon theological exposition not true to the New Testament, or, if true, is set up as authoritatively necessary for conversion or church membership. Therefore, a return to the New Testament is necessary not as an end in itself, but as a means to the attainment of Christian unity.
2. Was there anything distinctive in our denomination?
   Both liberals and conservatives have maintained that we have had distinctive points of view. By this they have meant that we have held either ideas not emphasized by other denominations, or that we hold them with a peculiar clarity, emphasis, or "bulldog" tenacity.

In a brilliant address at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, June 28, 1954, C. C. Morrison outlined twelve basic points in the ideology of the Disciples of Christ. In a fascinating analogy he took from baseball, he declared that we had scored on eight of these positions, had been left on base on three of them, and had struck out on one. The first eight points are the concept of one church, the sinfulness of division, the Lordship of Christ, the priority of faith, the secondary authority of opinion, a reasonable interpretation of the Bible, the observance of weekly communion, the idea of unity in faith and liberty in all things, and the witness to unity as our mission (although I am uncertain whether I remember this point clearly).

On these points, Dr. Morrison stated, we have scored runs. Certainly, these are recognizable ideas of the Disciples, although when it comes to the manner in which we have interpreted some of the ideas, one wonders whether the analogy would not be more accurate if we stated that on some of these ideas we have only reached first or second base, rather than scored home runs.

For example, Mr. Campbell, it is true, laid down some excellent principles for interpreting the Bible. But it is questionable that our people showed much liberal biblical interpretation as a result of following Mr. Campbell's principles. Rather, our liberal interpretation of the Bible was derived largely from the teachings in interdenominational seminaries. The statement is often made that we have always been a reasonable people in using the Bible, but it seems to me that we have as often been as literal, mechanical, and wooden as any other denomination.

Dr. Morrison held that basic in our ideology are the doctrine of the restoration of New Testament Christianity, the independence of the local church, and the five-point or six-point steps in conversion. He states that we have been left on base at these points and that they need modification. To this I would add a hearty "Amen"! Here again, on the matter of the independence of the local church I should state that, from a legal point of view, we are congregational, but in actual practice at the local church level we have, it seems to me, practiced a strange mixture of the episcopal, presbyterian, and congregational principles. More than one of our churches have degenerated into congregational anarchy, or lay or ministerial autocracy. But this is heresy, too!

Dr. Morrison reached the heights of his Cane Ridge address, which was something of a "nuclear explosion," when he stated—continuing his baseball analogy—that we have struck out on baptism when we equated baptism with immersion. I reserve comment on this until later. Dr. Morrison was at his inimitable best on this occasion.

Of these basic concepts, what was distinctive in our denomination? Richard Niebuhr in his book, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism,* has pointed out that the Methodists, Baptists, and Disciples were alike on the frontier in that they all used the methods of the revival, stressed immediacy in religious experience, used clergymen of meager intellectual training, and organized churches on the left-wing principle. But the Disciples differed from the Methodists and Baptists in their attempt to overcome denominationalism by rejecting "human creeds" and seeking church unity on a biblical basis. Cer-

tainly, these two emphases were distinctive in the Disciples. To the position of passionately advocating Christian unity and overcoming denominationalism by a stress on New Testament Christianity, another emphasis in their worship seems to me to be distinctive, namely, the weekly celebration of the Lord's supper, or communion service, as a means of Christian growth. Much of the spiritual strength of the Disciples of Christ is found in this weekly service when a peculiar fervor and sense of communion are generated every week. The emphasis on the steps in conversion—faith, repentance (confession), baptism, remission of sins, and gift of the Holy Spirit—is also distinctive among the Disciples. The content and manner of taking the confession emphasize the Lordship of Jesus in a peculiar way. It may also be that our position on baptism is distinctive in that many of our churches have emphasized immersion for the remission of sins.

Were we a movement, a sect, an association, an institution? We must remember that there were four basic streams flowing together by around 1835 to form the Disciples of Christ, in addition to other streams almost too numerous to mention. The answer to this question, therefore, depends upon two things: first, how we define sect or association or movement, and secondly, upon the stage of growth manifested at a particular time by each of these streams. This is a quicksand type of question. For example, the Campbells started out as a religious association, or society, which soon organized itself into a church, and, although I cannot verify the quotation myself, Dr. Morrison declares that Alexander Campbell stated that when they joined the Baptists the Disciples became a denomination.

Many of our conservatives and some liberals have denied that we are a sect. What is a sect? Charles S. Braden has enumerated six distinctions between a sect and a denomination. Sects are likely (1) to have specific points of emphasis, (2) to be small, (3) to be local or regional, (4) to have an untrained ministry, (5) to lack many educational or eleemosynary institutions, and (6) to be not very co-operative with the church as a whole. The lines may criss-cross, so that this classification may hold in some cases and not in others. Professor Roland H. Bainton has enumerated four marks of the radical sects of the 16th century: (1) the ethical ideal of a pure church, (2) Christian primitivism, (3) a heightened sense of eschatology, (4) the demand for separation of church and state.

William Warren Sweet has pointed out that when left-wing Protestantism was transferred from Europe to the American frontiers its characteristics were modified. Certainly, a number of the above

enumerated marks of sects were at one time characteristic of the various streams which eventually made the Disciples a people. I should not want to try to give a definitive answer to this question without extensive study. But a tentative conclusion is that we began as a movement, became an association, acquired many characteristics of the sects, and are now still in the process of being institutionalized.

Have we been evangelistic, ecumenical, or confessional?

A. *Evangelistic.* The Christian association began with the purpose of promoting "simple evangelical Christianity." Alexander Campbell, however, opposed revivals on biblical grounds and also on metaphysical grounds. He believed that there are two sorts of power, physical and moral. To put matter in motion, men use physical power; to put minds in motion, men use motives or arguments. God uses motives or arguments to reach the minds of men. Revivals which stress physical motion are not addressed to the reason of man. Campbell exalted the tongue of the orator and the pen of the writer, not because of their physical power but because they are to the mind "as the arms are to the body." Deprecating the misuse of the tongue by the orators of the revivalistic movements, he nevertheless expressed himself as being in favor of long or "protracted" meetings. By contrast, Stone found much to praise in revivalism, although he condemned fanaticism and excesses. Certainly, revivalism has at times been used by our denomination, but it may be accurate to state that we have had more skepticism of excesses than some other denominations in this country.

B. *Ecumenical.* Even when the idea of unity has been centered in a static, wooden reproduction of a composite or "jigsaw puzzle," New Testament-model church, the intense drive for unity and union has been dominant in the teaching and preaching of our churches. In our 20th century world "Christian unity and co-operation" are part of the religious oxygen we breathe. Certainly, our churches have the same mission any other Christian communion has—but in these ecumenical times it must recall over and over again that it was "born and bred" at a period when the struggle for Christian unity took place in a briar patch. In a "hydrogen bomb" age, none other than a co-operative approach can meet the desperate needs of mankind. Our churches, arising in the early days of our national life, lighted a candle for Christian unity, and have managed not only to keep it aflame against the storms of our own inner controversies, but have also increased the brightness of the flame.

What are some of the problems which we have never really faced up to and which we must now face? The list of these could be expanded into a large catalogue involving questions of polity, promotion, theology, social and ecumenical relationships. Lack of time and investigation prevents me from making a full list, but among our problems are these:

1. Our general position has been antitheological and antidoctrinal over the years. This position has created a vacuum into which every conceivable position has been poured. Our laymen and even some of our ministers have borrowed a wide variety of positions on theological questions because we have often had only a theological emptiness on many doctrines. In some ways this has been advantageous in that it has freed us from dogmatism, but in other ways it has tended to divorce us from making solid contributions to contemporary theological thinking. The report has come to me that some of our students in interdenominational seminaries are troubled by our lack of theological content, and often enter other religious communions where they believe that they can find more theological substance.

Certainly, it is good for us not to be enmeshed in doctrinal dogmatism, but one may well question whether or not we have faced the necessity for having a more solid doctrinal basis than we have had in the past. Some have pointed out that even in being antitheological we cannot escape some kind of theology. Certainly, we cannot simply quote the Bible or project our own religious experience without involving ourselves in some kind of a theological position, however simple it may be.

2. We have never really faced up to the problem of whether or not we are an all inclusive or an all exclusive fellowship. This question was raised in the early days of the discussion between the "Reformers" of the Campbells and the "Christians" of Stone's persuasion over the merger of their two groups. A study of the pages of the *Millennial Harbinger* and the *Christian Messenger* indicates that not all of the legalists were in Campbell's camp, nor were all of the latitudinarians in Stone's camp. Both men were at times troubled by narrow legalists. In general, however, we may state that the Campbellians were inclined to stress the exclusive fellowship at certain points. Campbell was suspicious of Stone's inability to grasp fully his plan of "the divine original of Christianity." When he commented in the *Millennial Harbinger* on the "union meeting" of the "Christians" and "Reformers" at Lexington, Kentucky, he rejoiced not so much in the union, but in the fact that the "Christians" were at last relinquishing

their Arianism and other heresies, and embracing the purity of New Testament Christianity.

Although there is a strong stress upon a New Testament pattern in the *Declaration and Address,* there are passages which also apparently flavor an inclusive fellowship. Both traditions have been present in our churches from the beginning. One group has maintained that the essential thing is that the fellowship should not be broken, regardless of theological differences; the other has insisted that only belief in a fixed New Testament pattern of beliefs can qualify one for membership in the Church.

This question of whether or not we are to be an inclusive or an exclusive membership is of vital importance to "questions of merger" on the mission field, a subject which has been discussed elsewhere in these articles, and is of more crucial importance than the historical development of the Disciples of Christ.

3. Although the question of the name that we are to be called is one in which I have little personal interest, it is a serious problem from the standpoint of public relations. There is a sense in which Alexander Campbell apparently won the debate with Barton W. Stone over the use of "Disciples" versus "Christian." Our official designation in the Federal census of religious bodies is "Disciples of Christ." And this is the name we are known by among ecumenical delegates. However, the name Stone applied to individual believers, "Christian," at some point in our history was fastened to the vast majority of our churches in America. This has created a serious problem for our evangelistic program, because the average unchurched citizen in the United States does not understand why a Disciple is a member of the Christian Church when a Catholic is a member of the Catholic Church and a Baptist is a member of the Baptist Church. Thus far, we have been blithely unaware of the problem we have created in good public relations. From the position of world public relations the problem is the more baffling because our churches in Great Britain, Canada, and Australia are called "Churches of Christ." We have scrambled our names as though different groups among us have deliberately tried either to conceal our identity or deny our common relationship. Whether or not anyone can now unscramble our "name predicament" is questionable.

4. We have always insisted on the distinction between faith and opinions. We have asserted that in essentials of the faith, belief is necessary, and we have stated that in nonessentials there is liberty. All seem to agree that it is a helpful distinction, but we have found it im-

possible to agree on what are the essential faith and the nonessential opinions. Our unfortunate actual divisions and our various partial divisions which mean a break in fellowship have come about because we have enunciated this principle, but have not successfully worked it out in a way to escape disunity.

5. There is also the question of baptism which has been troublesome from the beginning of our churches. Perhaps the most difficult of all of our problems, it is of the utmost importance in our ecumenical relationships.

From the beginning, we have been an immersionist body of Christians. Were this all it would not be so serious, but we have had so much controversy over baptism that we have had a certain stamp placed upon us. It is not so much the "Methodist dry-cleaning versus dunking" type of joke I now refer to, but the frame of reference into which we have been placed as "a narrow-minded, legalistic immersionist religious body." Both Campbell and Stone were troubled by the legalists on the question of baptism. But Dr. Morrison is right, it seems to me; to Campbell must be assigned much of the major responsibility for our predicament on baptism. His writings and his debates had much to do with the subject. The *Christian System* devotes much attention to immersion, and in his debate with N. L. Rice four of the six propositions were on baptism. Barton W. Stone, as we have observed, pleaded many times that controversy over baptism cease. He believed that immersion was baptism, but he did not believe in excluding the unimmersed from Christian fellowship. On many occasions he made it clear that he belived that the unimmersed should not be excluded from Christian fellowship either on earth or in heaven. When one correspondent stated that only the immersed are Christians and that he was not authorized to look upon pedobaptists and Quakers as Christians, Stone replied,

> Should the above sentiment be true and I should ever be convinced of its truth, I shall in honesty relinquish my profession of religion. . . . The clouds of desperation would forever cover my mind, and the ghosts of skepticism would forever haunt me, and whisper in my ear that religion is a dream.

Perhaps no Christian Churches, or Disciples of Christ, have ever practiced sprinkling or pouring as forms of baptism. However, some churches or ministers receive members into full fellowship in the church, if they feel that they have already received Christian baptism. In only a few churches is this the openly announced practice. Practices vary in churches even within the same city. A limited number of churches permit exceptions to immersion and will receive Methodists,

Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and other Christians. Such exceptions are permitted when (1) it will unite a family, (2) when unusual illness or physical disability exists, or (3) when it is a matter of Christian conscience with the person who feels that he has already experienced Christian baptism.

There seem to be at least three positions on baptism among the Christian churches, or Disciples of Christ:

a) The legalistic—Some feel that baptism is a legal command of Christ which has the effect of stern law. These persons sincerely feel that baptism is not only immersion, but that it is a positive command of Jesus which has the effect of a binding law that cannot be ignored without danger to one's eternal salvation.

b) The spiritual and semilegal—Baptism is not a legal command, but is a spiritual test of obedience. One cannot escape the necessity for baptism either for church membership or forgiveness of sins, but he should dwell on the spiritual rather than its legalistic aspects.

c) The spiritual—latitudinarian or liberal—Some form of baptism ought to be practiced by the church, but immersion need not be an absolute requirement except for those who have never been baptized at all; for to make immersion a test of being a Christian is to stress something which Jesus mentioned rarely in all of His teachings. Those who hold this position will not practice sprinkling for baptism, nor will they accept unbaptized persons, but they will accept the unimmersed from Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Lutheran, and other churches, if these persons feel that they have already had Christian baptism. These churches feel with Barton W. Stone, one of the founders of the Christian churches, or Disciples of Christ, that external immersion is valid baptism practiced in the earliest days of the church, but Christian love cannot tolerate a position on an external act which would exclude others from the church on earth.

In his famous Lunenburg letter written in 1837, Alexander Campbell asserted that the unimmersed will have an opportunity for salvation in heaven. This more liberal view shocked some, but has been generally accepted by members of the Christian churches who have said, "We are Christians only, but *not the only* Christians." Although Campbell excluded the unimmersed from fellowship in the Church on earth, Stone apparently to the end of his life believed in the fellowship and communion with the "pious unimmersed" in the "kingdom on earth." But the Campbell tradition has been the stronger. Indeed, the Stone tradition became almost nonexistent in second-generation Disciples.

We can make no estimate of the number of persons or churches holding to the above positions, but it is unfortunate that discussions on baptism often grow bitter. The Disciples of Christ, or Christian churches, have emphasized and will probably continue to stress "believer's baptism" in contrast to infant baptism. In Europe, just now, there is a questioning of infant baptism within those churches which historically have been most ardent in defending the practice. A small minority in the Church of England are prepared to reject infant baptism. Eminent theologians such as Emil Brunner and Karl Barth have apparently recently questioned the practice of infant baptism.

6. Among the problems or questions which have never been resolved among us is the problem of the connexional relationship of the churches. How ought a church to relate itself to other churches? What is the function of conferences and conventions? Conferences, apparently, played a stronger part among the "Christians" than among the "Reformers." However, the references which I have thus far been able to locate are too fugitive for me to determine their relationship.

A study by Dr. D. Ray Lindley reveals that Alexander Campbell came to the position where he believed in a strong connexional relationship. I remember that some quotations Lindley gave at the Tennessee State Convention several years ago indicated Campbell's very strong insistence that new educational and missionary work be launched not by single congregations, but as the result of the decision of many churches meeting together. My own position is expressed by Dr. W. E. Garrison in his pamphlet on the origin and mission of the Disciples. He writes,

> It is not enough for churches to be free. They must have a sense of responsibility for the whole enterprise of which they are parts. A local church is more than a local institution. It falls short of the New Testament ideal if it cuts itself off from others and confines its interest and its effort to its own community. A church that fences itself in by its own independence or indifference is neither free nor responsible.

7. A final problem, among many others, is the problem of stewardship; this involves the adequate support of our educational, missionary, benevolent, and social welfare enterprises. A quickening of interest is now becoming apparent, but apparently support of our various enterprises has not had a very solid base since our early beginnings. It is not a matter that some enterprises receive priority in support; the problem will be solved only as our churches at the "grass roots" grasp the fundamental, basic relationship involved in God's cre-

ation of life and all material satisfactions. Man's stewardship of all things is basic to all of our redemptive enterprises. Certainly, it is noteworthy that we seem to be revealing increasing strength today in the geographical areas where we are giving increasing attention to educational institutions.

Here is a story—with large missing links—revealing peaks of achievement and valleys of failure. It is the story of a remarkable movement of men and ideas—the largest group indigenous to American soil. It is not only American, it is also in the continuing historical Christian tradition. But it is not simply an orthodox continuation of traditional Christianity. It possesses too many rebellious elements to be an echo of the past. It is too close to other "left wing" Protestant groups, and too much a part of the rising tide of the American frontier, to embrace nothing but the old tradition.

Today this movement is represented by the humanist at one extreme and the "hard-shell" fundamentalist at the other. There are few humanists; there are more narrow, literalistic fundamentalists who believe that there is no salvation outside of their own pattern of biblical doctrine. Yet, members in these two groups are relatively small. The majority of the members of our denomination are not extremists. The main stream of our churches are people who have pride in their church, who want peaceful relations with their religious neighbors, and who feel that, although their traditions are priceless, they are quite willing to welcome new light which is yet to break forth from God's Holy Word.

CHRISTIAN UNITY AND WORLD MISSIONS

By

Virgil A. Sly

Introduction

THERE will be no attempt in this paper to discuss Disciples historic positions, doctrines or beliefs. Instead we shall endeavor to bring ourselves immediately to the present situation as relates to Christian unity and world missions. There are many who are much better qualified than the writer to discuss the doctrinal and theological positions of the Disciples of Christ. As a missions administrator, however, it is my responsibility to face the reality of a missionary movement in a growing ecumenical framework and to seek decisions whether the churches established upon the mission field can, with integrity and in free conscience, enter into movements of Christian union. Therefore, we shall touch lightly the history of the development of Disciples positions on matters of restoration of the New Testament Church and endeavor to portray the present situation with just a brief reference to background.

Disciples Policy and Union Participation

What is the Disciples position on unity? Have the Disciples an articulated plant whereby Disciples churches may participate in movements of organizational union and still maintain fellowship within the body of the Disciples of Christ or at least retain the approval of the Disciples of Christ of their actions? Is there a voice within the framework of our Disciples organizational and corporate life that can or should speak for the Disciples of Christ on matters of union? These, among many others, are the questions that perplex missions administrators as they try to find their way with mission churches within the growing ecumenical pattern of mission life. The truth of the matter is that the Disciples of Christ have more of an urge for union than a plan of union.

Disciples Longing for Unity

There is no question that the Disciples of Christ have longed for the union of God's people throughout the history of their movement. Beginning with Thomas Campbell's historic statement in the *Declaration and Address,* "that the Church of Christ upon the earth is essen-

tially, intentionally, and constitutionally one," down to the present day, the dream and concern of the Disciples have been for Christian unity. They believed that the simple pattern they have found in the New Testament was so logical that there would be no doubt that the denominations would eagerly accept it as a basis for uniting a divided Christendom. They were out to restore the New Testament Church. Many felt that the mere announcement of this discovery would cause the Christians and church bodies to see the errors of their ways. The "plea" of the Disciples of Christ became the rallying cry of a people with a tremendous urge and a glorious vision. But the response did not come; individuals responded, but not church groups. The Disciples were hurt and bewildered that their simple statement fell upon such unresponsive ears and increasingly they withdrew more and more within a pattern of a denomination and less and less of that of a movement.

We mentioned above the fact that individuals caught the import of the dream and always there have been voices raised to call the Disciples back to the basic purpose of their being which is the union of the Church of Jesus Christ. Disciples have been in the forefront in every ecumenical and co-operative movement throughout the years but, as a people, little has happened except a deep urge for unity with no implementation for its achievement.

The Disciples Position on Unity

There is much to be said concerning the logic of the Disciples dream. As stated in *The Unfinished Reformation* by Charles Clayton Morrison on page 153, "The Disciples have always claimed that they were out to restore the New Testament Church. Not only so, but, like virtually all denominations in this category, their dominant feeling until quite recent times has been that they had actually restored it. The particular features upon which they have relied to justify this conviction are (1) the independence and autonomy of the local church, (2) believer's baptism, (3) immersion baptism, (4) weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, (5) elders (or presbyters) and deacons in the local church, (6) 'no creed but Christ,' (7) a rational or 'common sense' theory of conversion, and (8) a plea for Christian unity upon the basis of this pattern of the church which they found in the New Testament."

Unfortunately, for those who adhere rigidly to this pattern, the general ecumenical movement is not conforming to a plan resolved by a single denomination. The ecumenical movement is calling to the Dis-

ciples to come into the program to make their contribution with other participating religious bodies. It is obvious that the ecumenical movement is not going exclusively to the Disciples position. There is no question about the ecumenical spirit of the Disciples, but, as Dr. Morrison so well puts it, "Their witness to the ecumenical ideal has been eclipsed by the restorationism with which it is coupled." (Page 155.) It does not seem possible that the ecumenical movement will tend toward any one position. It becomes increasingly obvious that all churches are to be invited to make their contributions to the total pattern. This places the absolute restorationist in an impossible position.

It is the unhappy truth that the lack of union implementation in Disciples policy has brought about tensions throughout the years among the Disciples. It is also unfortunate that most of these tensions have been centered upon one item within the Disciples position, that is, church membership. For example, in the heated controversies of the 1920's, concerning the policies of the missionary program under The United Christian Missionary Society as relates to church membership, there were reams upon reams of paper utilized in projecting the controversy. I have been unable to find in any of the discussions any peculiar or distinctive concern for Christian union. In the convention held at Winona Lake in 1922 the following was approved by the board of managers as "a purely administrative policy":

> "In harmony with the teachings of the New Testament as understood by this board of managers, The United Christian Missionary Society is conducting its work everywhere on the principles of receiving into membership of the churches at home and abroad, by any of its missionaries, only those who are immersed, penitent believers in Christ.
>
> "Furthermore, it is believed by this board of managers, that all of the missionaries and ministers appointed and supported by this board are in sincere accord with this policy, and certainly it will not appoint and indeed, it will not continue in its service anyone known by it to be not in such accord. It disclaims any right and disowns any desire to do otherwise."

Later in Oklahoma City in 1925 the International Convention received the report of the Peace Conference Committee which recommended:

> "1. That no person be employed by The United Christian Missionary Society as its representative who has committed himself or herself to belief in, or practice of, the reception of unimmersed persons into the membership of churches of Christ.

"2. That if any person is now in the employment of The United Christian Missionary Society as representative who has committed himself or herself to belief in, or practice of, the reception of unimmersed persons into the membership of the churches of Christ, the relationship of that person to The United Christian Missionary Society be severed as employee. And that this be done as soon as possible, with consideration given to the interest of the person involved without jeopardy to the work of the Society."

It was at this convention that the public controversy reached a new height and it was with dismay that some of the Disciples attending the convention noted that it was the first time the item of belief was included in such a statement. The board of managers in St. Louis in December, 1925, sought to interpret this action of the International Convention as it related to the staff. Their interpretation is as follows:

"1. The board of managers defines the expression 'employed representative,' as found in the Peace Conference Committee's report to the International Convention at Oklahoma City, to apply to officers, secretaries, foreign missionaries and to pastors, field workers, superintendents of schools, and heads of institutions and Bible teachers employed by the Society in America.

"2. The board of managers holds that the expression 'committed to belief in' should be administered in the light of the information secured by the Executive Committee and that every accused person should have a fair and impartial hearing.

"3. The board of managers interprets the expression 'committed to belief in' as not intended to invade the right of private judgment, but only to apply to such an open agitation as would prove divisive.

"4. The board of managers wishes to call to the attention of the brotherhood the statement in the Oklahoma City Resolution, 'that all of us be patient, remembering that time is necessary to effect changes, and make readjustments without injustice to persons or injury to the work of the Society, and that our brethren give loyal support to The United Christian Missionary Society, as to other agencies, to the end that the Gospel may be preached and the churches be built up in all the earth.' In quoting this resolution we wish to call attention to the fact that the political and social conditions on the mission fields in question demand that great patience and tact be exercised in approaching these questions, or injury will be done not only to our missionary relations, but even to our national relations.

"5. The board of managers is not unmindful that it must use every possible means of acquainting the entire

> brotherhood with the unusual and unprecedented changes that are now going on in some of the countries of the Orient. These changes are bound to have a very great influence upon all missionary activities. Therefore, it is necessary that in every approach to the mission field extreme caution be used and no changes of policy be hastily put into operation."

It will be seen by the above quotations that the pattern of Disciples thinking was centered upon a single doctrinal position rather than upon the total issue of Christian unity. The missionaries of The United Christian Missionary Society have taken seriously a statement in the Preamble of the Code of Regulations of the United Society which says in part, "That a world of Christian brotherhood may be realized, and that the unity of God's people may be achieved, the Society is established." It seems to me that the tragedy of the controversial issues at Winona and Oklahoma City was the fact that the discussion concerned a specific item of Christian doctrine rather than the total principle of Christian unity.

The net result of such actions as Winona and Oklahoma City very frankly put a gag upon the missionary and a brake upon his actions. He felt it impossible even to participate in the negotiations going on in the field in the 1930's and 1940's where Christian union was being discussed because it would lead him inevitably into conflict with such resolutions relative to church membership.

Unity on the Mission Field

Unity on the mission field has arisen in many forms and under varying circumstances, and on practically all the fields the level of co-operation has been extraordinarily high. Missionaries going to the field, working with non-Christian cultures and in primitive societies, have seen the utter futility of making too specific an issue about the difference in the religious patterns they represented. The field of co-operation has been utilized to a great extent. In fact, in education, in medicine, in ministerial training and in social service, the definite trend has always been to ever increasing co-operation. For the most part the major religious bodies from America have pooled their theological training. This has had a marked ecumenical effect upon all of the graduates from these institutions. Perhaps the outstanding example of union on the mission field has been the culmination of the union of the church of South India which took in the Anglican churches as well as those of the congregational type of church. This union has proved eminently successful. Then during the war the union program

was accelerated in Japan and the Philippines under military pressure occasioned by the Japanese. The church union forced by the Japanese in 1941 continued through the war. The Japanese also endeavored to place the same pattern in operation in the Philippines. The board of managers of The United Christian Missionary Society in 1941 put this action:

> "That the board authorize the Foreign Division to express to the Japanese church of the Disciples of Christ its sincere sympathy with them in their determination to make all their work more fully indigenous and its deep appreciation of the additional financial responsibilities the Christians have assumed."

In November, 1941, the chairman of the Annual Convention of the Churches of Christ in Japan wrote to the board of trustees a statement of gratitude for all the board had done and a farewell to the board since "This conference will be the last one to be held by our Churches of Christ in Japan."

In a meeting of the board of managers called for May 4 and 5, 1943, the following action was taken:

> "That the board of managers approve the action taken by the board of trustees on March 10, 1943, relative to our policy for future work in Japan as follows: 'That we affirm our determination to continue our fellowship with the Christian movement in Japan, that we authorize the Department of Oriental Missions to express to the Japan section of the Committee on East Asia of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America our interest in and sympathy with their suggestion to plan our future policy and program on a united basis, with the understanding that such plans will be brought back to the board of trustees for action.' "

When the war was over and the military edict concerning Christian union had been lifted by the occupation government, our churches in Japan voted by congregations to stay in the union. Some church bodies withdrew but the substantial core of the union was retained. Our Filipino churches also voted by congregations to stay in the union in Northern Luzon. The churches in the Manila area voted to withdraw.

On the whole, the relationships of the churches both in Japan and in the Philippines within the union have been very satisfactory and the Disciples of Christ within the union have felt that they have been able to make a more significant witness within the union than they could outside of it. Any program of organic union immediately raises questions that have to do with doctrine, ecclesiastical control and policy,

because when divergent Protestant groups come into intimate relationships these questions must be resolved or the union fails. This was and is the case in the two programs under discussion. The question of creed, of church organization, of church membership, of ecclesiastical control, and of property and finance, have been vexing problems. They have not been resolved even yet, but our churches in the Philippines and Japan have been making an effective witness to their understanding of the Disciples' position on all these matters.

Dr. H. B. McCormick and I visited both the Philippines and Japan in 1950 and asked for a statement by the pastors and Christian leaders as to their position on the united church. These statements are quoted below:

Philippines—"Statement of Northwest Luzon Conference Officers

"OUR STAND

"1. The Evangelical Churches in the Philippines recognize the great need of a united front in the midst of a strongly Roman Catholic country, that their voice may be effectively presented before the government and people of the Philippines. Because of such need the churches of Christ (Disciples) in Northwest Luzon joined the United Church of Christ in the Philippines that they may contribute their influence, history and heritage to so great an enterprise. This does not mean that we lose our faith, message and practices as Disciples. From our basis of union the churches are guaranteed to continue in their faith and practices. Because of this we can still declare that we are true and loyal to every teaching and practice which is dear to all Disciples.

"2. CREED We do not subscribe to any man-made creed. We have no creed but Christ, no book but the Bible, no name but Christian, no overlord but our Master.

"3. ECCLESIASTICAL CONTROL According to the basis of union the congregational authority and practice is not impaired. Our churches are as free as they were before they joined the United Church of Christ. Our church government is based on the simple New Testament Church.

"Regarding the use of Bishops, Superintendents and Moderators, our churches do not understand them to mean the way the Roman Catholic or other ecclesiastical churches use them. We, as Disciples, recognize that the officers of the United Church are only executive officers.

"4. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP We accept only as members those of age who have been immersed. Unimmersed Evangelical members from other communions are regarded only as affiliated members.

"5. CONTINUATION OF MISSION The Philippines need more than ever before, spiritual rehabilitation and moral uplift, and because we Disciples of the Philippines have a mission and a message to give to Evangelical Christianity, even for a greater union because of what we stand for, we pray for the continuance of the mission work of the Disciples of Christ in the Philippines.

Laoag, Ilocos Norte

Executive Committee of the
Northwest Luzon Conference
March 6, 1950

Pablo Bringas
Canuto Batoon
Dominador Layus
Pablo Tumbaga
Hilarion V. Sabaot
Mercedes R. Manglal-lan
Silvestre Morales
Alfredo S. Banuyong
Juan F. Santos
Jose Blanco
Norwood B. Tye
Urbano M. Santos
Julio F. Pascua
Evaristo P. Tagatac"

Japan "STATEMENT BY THE PASTORS, EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL WORKERS IN ATTENDANCE AT THIS CONFERENCE (TOKYO . . . 1950)

FOUR POINTS OF REAFFIRMATION REGARDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY SOCIETY—RELATED CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN JAPAN AND THE NIPPON KIRISUTO KYODAN (THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN JAPAN)

"I. CREED The United Church of Christ in Japan has no creed. There is, however, a committee at work studying the matter of a creed, but we do not think that it will become an accomplished fact. We, from the beginning, recognize ourselves as being absolutely opposed to the formulation of a creed, and will continue to make this witness.

"II. KYODAN ORGANIZATION The Kyodan does in no way issue directives to any local congregation. It completely recognizes the independence and autonomy of the local congregation. We, of course, firmly hold to this principle, and will never recognize any authority exerted by the Kyodan whether on a local or national level.

"III. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP Regarding church membership, the Kyodan leaves conditions upon which persons may be admitted to membership in the local church in the hands of the local congregation.

"We receive into membership those who, after confession of faith, are baptized by immersion. We do not recognize infant baptism; we do not practice it. If anyone has been

sprinkled as an infant and seeks membership in the church, upon confession of faith, he is baptized by immersion. Each local congregation reserves the right to establish the conditions of church membership (i.e., "so far as the Kyodan is concerned" is implied here. K.C.H.).

"IV. PROPERTY AND FINANCE The Kyodan has no claim to the property of our churches, schools, or social service agencies. For instance all school property is held in a Legal Holding Corporation under a Board of Trustees; the Social Service agencies are owned by a legal holding corporation under their board of trustees; and the churches are owned by a legal holding corporation of the Churches of Christ (Disciples) in Japan. (The only exception to this is the case of the Takinogawa Church in Tokyo, which is held by its own legal holding corporation.)

"At any time when The United Christian Missionary Society wishes to offer monetary aid to any of our schools, churches, or social agencies, it is perfectly free to do so directly.

"V. CONCLUSION We recognize that there are questions regarding the constitution, creed, and organization of the Kyodan which are still in a state of flux. However, we are determined to remain in the Kyodan, helping it to become a complete and successful union by bearing witness to the faith and beliefs which we hold."

The present situation which calls for decision lies not within the pattern of the participation of the Disciples churches in these two countries. They have made that decision and have voted to stay in under the present circumstances. The basic decision is whether The United Christian Missionary Society representing the Disciples of Christ in America can continue to have fellowship and can continue to support work within the united church framework. It is this decision which causes most vexing problems to emerge. For example, if these union churches adopt policies that are divergent in doctrinal practices and our churches fit into such practices can The United Christian Missionary Society representing the Disciples of Christ in America continue their fellowship and support in light of the rather rigid pattern of church union as envisaged by our people generally? We have continued our support of these churches. We have participated in the financial support of the Interboard Committees which help to govern them. We have never officially approved a document which would identify us as a part of the basic structure of these movements. This has caused our churches in these countries to look with some suspicion upon our efforts in their behalf feeling that we are withholding our

approval of their action by non-official participation. They have said to us in much more polite language than this but nevertheless the meaning is eminently understandable, "Are you going to fish or cut bait?" In other words, shall they look upon the Disciples as thoroughly behind the union program or always withholding full approval and participating with an array of reservations?

The Attitude of Younger Churches as Revealed in Conferences, Such as, Willingen

The members of the younger churches meeting in Willingen made a statement in their own conference which sums up in a very terse manner the attitudes that I have met throughout the world as related to the younger churches. They said:

> "We believe that unity of the churches is an essential condition of effective witness in advance. In the lands of the younger churches divided witness is a crippling handicap. We of the younger churches feel this way very keenly. While unity may be desirable in the lands of the older churches, it is *imperative* in those of the younger churches."

In the statement of the *Calling of the Church to Mission in Unity,* the whole conference made an unusual declaration, "We believe that in the ecumenical movement, God has provided a way of co-operation in witness and service, and also a means for the removal of much that mars such witness and service."

They also made this significant statement which stands out as a rebuke to Western Christendom, "We can no longer be content to accept our divisions as normal." Intermingled with this desire for unity are a rising tide of nationalism and the feeling of the younger churches that they are of such maturity that they can begin to make their own decisions and chart their own courses. Western Christianity must face the fact that union is coming to the mission churches and we shall either be a part of that participation or apart from it.

The Urgency of the Present Situation

The entire missionary pattern is changing rapidly across the world along with the pressure of communism that is a potential threat. In many of our mission lands there is a rising tide of nationalism which seeks to identify its new freedoms with ancient cultures and religions. The mission churches, all isolated and weak, feel the absolute necessity of uniting, in order that they may utilize their combined strength to project their work and to give their witness.

In addition to the international and national political factors which are having a marked effect upon missionary activity in these days, it is the honest desire of the churches to be together. They have not come through the divisions of Western Christianity, are not thoroughly rooted in our differences, and feel frankly in many instances that the things which divide Western Christianity are of little consequence. As one national said to me, "We did not participate in the quarrels that divided Western Christianity. We have Christ. Why should we perpetuate the divisions when we are agreed in what we consider to be the essential elements of the Christian faith?" The great conferences of the past two years have brought the younger churches increasingly within the orbit of their considerations. The voices of these churches are being heard and the most compelling note of all is that of unity.

Perhaps the most perplexing problem is how to deal with this issue rapidly enough in order to meet the rising ecumenical spirit of the people. Take our case in Japan and the Philippines; there are issues of tension because the churches in Japan and the Philippines feel very frankly that we move too slowly. They feel that our unwillingness to participate officially in the union movement is an indication of a lack of trust and a desire to maintain control. For example, our mission in Japan asked for a commission to come to Japan to study problems in Christian unity. When the churches in Japan heard that the commission was coming, there was some disquietude among them. One pastor frankly asked, "Are they coming to tell us or to consult with us?" In this question there is a world of meaning.

Furthermore, the churches in many of the mission lands are going to unite. This is on the schedule. It is obvious to a missions administrator wherever he visits the fields that the time is coming when the churches on the mission field are going to unite. Our question is whether constructively and with integrity we can help them and still maintain our fellowship with them.

The Problems Involved in Union Participation

These union situations on the mission fields as related to the Disciples of Christ are as follows:

We are directly involved in the union program in Japan and the Philippines. That is, our churches in both of these countries have voted by congregational vote for participation and have indicated their continuing desire to remain in the project. The Philippine situation is

somewhat different in that the Tagalog churches in the Manila area have voted not to participate.

In Jamaica our missionaries have asked permission to participate in the preliminary talks within a commission on church union which includes Methodist, Congregational, Moravian, and Presbyterian churches. In central India, where we have been working for many years, there is a strong agitation for our mission to participate in the preliminary discussion on the possibility of a united church of central India. Our churches in Thailand are in the Church of Christ in Thailand but it does not have the organizational complexity or implications that the ones in Japan and the Philippines have at the present time. However, it is obvious, as the church grows in intimacy in its relationship, that these issues will have to be faced in Thailand also.

In the Belgian Congo for many years we have had one name for a church. It is called the Church of Christ of Congo. The various Protestant bodies who work in the Congo co-operate heartily and thoroughly through the Congo Protestant Council in maintaining this one church name. This does not mean that there is union as yet in the Belgian Congo, but there, too, even in a primitive church in its earliest stages arise questions on the part of the natives as to why there are different bodies operating in the Congo, and one cannot face the implication of a common church name without facing evntually the implication of common practices of doctrine and church membership.

In Mexico there are stirrings for preliminary conferences between the Congregationalists and the Disciples as to the possibility of eventual union of our work there. Also, we have a considerable agitation as far as Disciples of Christ are concerned in Mexico City that they participate not in strictly Disciples churches but in Protestant groups already established.

So it matters not much which way you turn, the issues of Christian union are to the fore and it is most opportune that the Disciples consider what the basic problems are that they must resolve for their eventual participation in such movements. Disciples have asserted through the years that they are leaders in ecumenical enterprises and advocates of Christian union. We find that we have become followers. This is a rather tragic indictment and makes us most uncomfortable.

The Dilemmas of the Disciples

The world missionary program of the Disciples of Christ faces the rising tensions and frustrations of an uneasy world which is having

its effect through the structure of the churches established by the missionary enterprise. We must realize that we live in a world of radical change. The masses of mankind are seeking for a better life and are intensifying their demands for land, higher standards of living, national independence, and racial equality. The achievements of political independence and the end of colonialism over wide areas of the earth have made a deep impression upon the emerging masses of mankind across the world. There is a recurrence of national and cultural loyalties which resent direction even if it is in the most kindly spirit. The younger churches are now emerging as a part of this national and international scene, and it is strategic that missions not be laggard in leading out in the expressed will of the people for a better way. The mission cannot be identified with either the political or religious structure of the West, because that in itself, with the temper of the world being what it is today, means that automatically there arise resentments which nullify much of the effective witness of the church.

Within this pattern of emerging consciousness of the dignity of man and his unmet desires and needs, the younger churches are having their say. The world mission requires an ever-enlarged partnership with the younger churches. Our churches in the United States and Canada must recognize that these churches have been making a contribution to the ecumenical activities of world Christianity. In this partnership the churches in the United States and Canada must accord to mission churches the right to discover truth as they see it and grant them the largest possible autonomy in order that they may bring forth a church rich in its traditions and vigorous in its creativity. The United Christian Missionary Society has always felt that it should retire administratively as a mission as the younger churches on the field mature. Considerable progress has been made in several of the fields to this end, with the churches being organized in a church body and our relationship to them as a mission becoming the relationship of church to church rather than a mission-controlled situation. This in itself makes somewhat complex the problem of Christian unity, because we are no longer the determining factor within the mission situation.

To add to the dilemmas of the Disciples, we have had no clear pattern, no participation within a Christian union organization. Therefore, practically the only thing we can do at this stage is to project questions for which answers must be found. The basic issues within these questions are, as follows:

The question of creeds.
The question of ecclesiastical control or dominance.

The question of the sacraments, i.e., open weekly communion and baptism by immersion.
The question of the acceptance of a Disciples ministry.
The question of a continuing Disciples witness within a united church.
The question of the future of a missionary program within a country where organic union has occurred.
The question of acceptability of administrative relationships within the union organization as related to The United Christian Missionary Society and the Disciples of Christ.
The question of the drift or direction of the union movement.
The question of the attitude of our churches participating (in other words, are they satisfied?).
The question of the motives underlying the union (in other words, is it basic and sound in its projection?).

It is the answer to these questions that will determine the continuing relationship of the Disciples of Christ within the organic union. However, we must be aware of the fact that it will not necessarily determine the participation of our churches in the union. The question is whether the Disciples of Christ in the United States and Canada can find within their conscience satisfactory replies to these questions that have been raised. Can they in free conscience participate with the churches or must they withdraw from the churches within the union?

The problem reaches beyond the basis of speculation as it relates to the church. There are questions of a much broader nature which Disciples of Christ must face. They are:

What difficulties do the churches see ahead in their continuing relationship with the United Church?
Would each missionary vote to continue participation and would he vote to make it official?
Upon what grounds would the churches feel that they would have to withdraw from the United Church, and upon what grounds would they feel that they should have to withdraw from the United Society and the Disciples of Christ?
Do the missionaries have any limit to their co-operation and participation within the United Church organization?
What are the trends in the developing United Church Movement in local autonomy, the observance of the sacraments, the development of creed, the problem of ordination to the ministry?
What is involved in the financial participation of the Disciples of Christ within the United Church?
What is involved in staff assignments?
What is involved in our continuing mission and organization?

What is our identity as a people in public relations in Japan and the Philippines and what effect will that have with our churches in the United States and Canada?

What continuing responsibility do the churches in the United States have as to the maintenance of institutions?

Shall the Disciples endeavor to grow in a country in which a union movement has been launched, or shall we be content to lose ourselves completely within the United Church and its structure?

What is the problem regarding present and future investment of capital funds?

What is the agreement of the participating churches in regard to recognizing church membership from participating members in the union?

What are the requisites for membership in exchange relation for new members?

Is there danger that the United Church will become an enlarged edition of the larger denominations participating?

What is the relationship with the Protestant groups not participating in the union?

Is there any trend that would break off relationship with the historic churches from which they emerge?

It is quite obvious that The United Christian Missionary Society does not have the answer to all these questions. It is also equally obvious that the brotherhood does not have the answers, which forces The United Christian Missionary Society into three possible procedures by which its present dilemma may be resolved.

First, we can ignore the fact that there is union in these countries and go ahead with the projecting of a mission of the Disciples of Christ, refusing to participate, but continuing our very broad program of co-operation on a national council and institutional level.

Second, we can have a nominal relationship, that is, "one foot in and one foot out." We can participate financially and never approve the structure of union or completely identify ourselves with the union organization. This will mean that our churches will eventually drift further and further away from it.

Third, we can officially participate in the union, become the advocate of it, and take the consequences of our decision.

Present Status of The United Christian Missionary Society Policy

The uncertainty of the United Society policy, on the matter of Christian union, sends us back into the controversial issues of the 1920's. At that time there were emerging upon the foreign fields cer-

tain basic trends which the missionaries recognized would lead inevitably into Christian union. In light of the discussions of the 1920's, within the 1930's our missionaries on the field requested the United Society for permission to participate in the preliminary discussions of the uniting organization of the Church of Christ in China and, because we could not face with any certainty the problems involved in a United Church organization as it related to church membership principally, the missionaries were refused permission even to participate in the preliminary discussions of the Church of Christ in China. This was a tragic mistake.

In 1948 the Foreign Division brought to the Board of Trustees of The United Christian Missionary Society a document entitled *The Crisis in Foreign Missions.* Again it pointed out that some decision had to be made on the matter of Society policy on Christian union. In 1949 the situation became rather tense even within the administrative circles of the Society when the Foreign Division insisted that something had to be done about our relationships to the United Church of Christ in Japan and in the Philippines. During that year Dr. H. B. McCormick, President of the Society, and myself, of the Foreign Division, went to Japan and the Philippines to see if anything could be done. At that time one significant point was resolved, that is, the point of local autonomy. Dr. McCormick reported back to the International Convention that the union in both countries was a fact. The churches of the Disciples of Christ were participating in the union upon their own will, and not from pressure from the missionaries or from the Foreign Division of The United Christian Missionary Society. As autonomous churches of the Disciples of Christ, they had the right to enter into union organization in their countries. Basically, the principle that was established was that these decisions had been made by autonomous churches. What this visit did not resolve was what would be the continuing and official relationship of The United Christian Missionary Society.

During 1950 and 1951, the Foreign Division saw the impossibility of a continuing laissez-faire policy and began to draw together a strategy that involved not only the issues of union, but policies that dealt with a church in a world in revolution, relationships to the younger churches, and the mobility and flexibility of program. This policy was presented to the trustees and the board of managers. Much debate ensued concerning the question of union. We have discussed at length the union procedure in the countries of the Philippines and

Japan. Now we must go beyond the actual structure of those union enterprises and begin to search out Disciples attitude.

As is stated in the *Strategy of World Missions* of the Foreign Division of The United Christian Missionary Society, the Society feels that the following elements must be basic to any consideration for the merger of our younger churches into a union movement.

> "1. The right of decision. The Society acknowledges that the church on the mission field has the right of decision. By this we mean the principle of the autonomy of the local church is applicable to the church in mission lands as well as to the church at home. However, it must be pointed out that the right of decision also assumes the willingness of the group who makes it to accept the results such decision may entail. If, for example, such decisions seriously affect continued fellowship of the churches with the United Society and with the Disciples of Christ in the United States and Canada, such decision should be carefully weighed before it is made, or if such decision means that continued aid, either financial or consultative, is impossible, considerations should be carefully studied before the final decision is made. In other words, the right of decision is the right of every church, but the consequences of that decision must be faced by the church and the Society.
>
> "2. The need of continuing fellowship. The churches of the mission fields were brought into being by the churches of the Disciples of Christ in the United States and Canada who feel responsible for their establishment and for their future development and nurture. It is important, therefore, that any merger of the churches thus established into a union church should entail an effort to preserve the continuing fellowship with their parent body through the years ahead. The Society seeks by means of mutual concern to preserve such fellowship. Any plan of union should, therefore, be thoroughly explored by both the church and the Society to see if such continued fellowship is possible.
>
> "3. The tradition of freedom. The Disciples' tradition of freedom from ecclesiastical control and from binding creedal statements is very precious to our people and must be preserved. In addition, our approach to Christianity based upon a simple Biblical presentation in teaching the doctrines must be retained. The strength of the Disciples of Christ has been in their freedom.
>
> "4. The continuing witness. In all considerations of unity the churches must see clearly the necessity of the continuing witness to the simple tenets of Disciples faith and practices. If the need that brought the Disciples of Christ

into being is valid it must not be lost in a union movement. The continued witness of the simple approach of man to God and the reliance of the Christian upon the Bible as his only guide, and the use of the Bible as a basis of church membership, is too valuable a contribution to world Christianity to be lost.

"5. Attitude of other communions. It will be necessary to explore the attitude of other communions participating in such union movements, as to finance, personnel and administration to discover whether their intention is to build up a permanent union program, or whether it is their intention to maintain full denominational authority with their participating churches."

The United Society endeavored under the leadership of the Foreign Division to find a way whereby it could resolve these elements into a basic policy. It recognized immediately that the moment it stepped into the field of the specific it was running into danger of becoming involved in a long church controversy that would have no ultimate value. Therefore, we tried to outline a strategy that would meet the situation and yet not force the Society into the impossible position of becoming an interpreter of Disciples policy and doctrinal practice. Therefore, we have outlined a strategy as follows:

"1. Recognize that the younger churches in our mission fields are rapidly reaching maturity of thought and action and, as such, are autonomous; and that our relationship is changing from mission direction to partnership in the witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"2. Acknowledge that the autonomy of the local church has no geographical boundaries and recognize that the function of The United Christian Missionary Society to counsel with and serve local churches in the expression of their ecumenical concern for Christians of all communions is the same for churches at home and abroad.

"3. Recognize that when movements of church union arise on the field the missionaries of The United Christian Missionary Society may participate with national leaders in the formative processes of such movements.

"4. Face with the churches of the Disciples of Christ on the field where plans of union are under discussion the problems of doctrine and practice inherent in various plans of church union and agree to procedure that will frankly state our position and the extent to which participation is possible and desirable.

"5. Agree that The United Christian Missionary Society has continuing responsibility in the maintenance of fellowship with and support of churches of the Disciples of

> Christ on the mission field which, as autonomous churches, enter movements of organizational union.
>
> "The Foreign Division will study any plans of union that may come under consideration, share them with the administration, the cabinet and the board of trustees, and will advise with the field. If necessary, an officer of the division will visit the field and share in the discussions and consultations."

Basically, what this strategy means is that we make the principle of the autonomy of the local church as valid on foreign mission fields as it is in the United States and Canada. The Society does not determine the doctrinal practices of the churches in the United States and Canada. It should not determine those practices in the churches abroad. The Society should, however, continue to practice and to teach the biblical and traditional policies of the Disciples of Christ in the mission fields. For example, in the field of church membership, The United Christian Missionary Society should teach and practice baptism by immersion. It would, however, not step into the autonomy of a church and dictate what its practice on such a matter should be. Therefore, if a church becomes a part of a united church and it is its own decision to follow some other practice, The United Christian Missionary Society cannot be held responsible, but neither should it break fellowship with that church even as it does not break fellowship with churches in the United States and Canada who have a different practice.

Basically, the strategy gives permission to the missionaries to become full partners in the preliminary discussion and to continue in the consummating decision of church union on the mission field. Also, it gives the Society an opening for a more comprehensive discussion of doctrinal practices of the emerging union movement. However, the basic note within the strategy is that The United Christian Missionary Society representing the Disciples of Christ shall have continuing responsibility in the maintenance of fellowship and support of churches of the Disciples of Christ who do enter movements of organizational union. This is the point where a number of Disciples would prefer that we withdraw.

In September and October of this year a commission, appointed by the board of trustees of The United Christian Missionary Society, will be in Japan to study whether it will be possible under such a strategy for the Society with integrity to continue maintaining full fellowship with the churches who have entered movements of organizational union.

In reality, we have to find the answers to the following questions:

> Shall we recommend full participation in the union church enterprise in the Philippines and in Japan? Shall we stand off and participate rather unofficially or shall we completely withdraw from all such movements?

It is desired that the executives of the Foreign Division, following the commission on inquiry to Japan, explore with all the fields the status of the various union movements in these fields and bring to the brotherhood within this next year a very comprehensive picture of the implications for all these movements. It may be that the decision that arises out of Christian unity on mission fields may become for the Disciples of Christ the greatest decision since the *Declaration and Address* that brought them into being.

The Disciples Need to Recapture the Leadership in Christian Union

Basically, the Disciples of Christ have to decide whether they are going to be in the main stream of the growing ecumenical movement or stand apart from it. It is obvious as the ecumenical movement is developing that it will not move within the orbit of any one denominational group. The question naturally becomes one of whether the Disciples deem that the "plea" is an exclusive one to which all Protestantism must come or whether they will share their convictions within the larger framework of the ecumenical movement. We stand to lose tremendously if we take the position that all Protestantism must come to a Disciples position. We lose our voice in Christian unity, we become a sectarian movement. We stand to gain by moving into the patterns of Christian unity that are emerging throughout the world, because we have a contribution to make with our freedom, our simple biblical interpretation of the church, and the democracy and simplicity of our position. What we have to decide as Disciples is whether we can evolve a pattern of union participation that is in the spirit of union rather than in the realm of technique.

What Are the Immediate Moves That We Must Make?

> First, we must consolidate the principle of local autonomy for churches at home and abroad.
>
> Second, we must recognize that uniformity of church life and practice is not possible or even to be desired.
>
> Third, we must encourage our churches to enter programs of Christian union.

Fourth, we must assure participating churches in union enterprises, even if we differ in practice and procedure, that we desire to continue in support and fellowship.

Fifth, we must utilize the mission union situation to inject a new spirit into the Disciples of Christ which will result in the revitalization of the church in America in the field of Christian unity.

We must recognize that the cause of Christ is greater than our opinion and anything that divides men in Christian fellowship is an evil. If God was great enough to send His son to die for the world, surely He is great enough to resolve the differences of the interpretations of men concerning the pattern of salvation which His son died to give. When I was in Japan last, one of our pastors said, "We are one in Christ." If we are, there cannot be any problem of fellowship that is insurmountable.

BOOK REVIEWS

C. F. D. Moule. *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek.* Cambridge University Press, 1953. x+241 pages. 25 shillings.

The modest title of this work does not do justice to its comprehensiveness. It is really a brief work on the syntax of New Testament Greek. Although he has many references to the work of previous grammarians, the author has collected his own examples of the various constructions found in the New Testament.

This book is not intended to be a complete grammar, but it is the best guide in English for the advanced student who wishes to study the syntax of New Testament Greek.—David C. Pellett.

William Garrett West. *Barton Warren Stone: Early American Advocate of Christian Unity.* Nashville: The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1954. xii+245 pages. $4.00.

In his article, elsewhere in this issue, William G. West wonders whether, in view of a minister's busy schedule, he will be able to produce a scholarly monograph in the next twenty-five years. He need have no such concern. He has produced this book, and it will vindicate his ability to make a scholarly and extremely important contribution in the field of the history of the Disciples of Christ.

It is appropriate that Dr. West's *Barton Warren Stone* should be reviewed in this issue of *The Shane,* dedicated as it is to articles concerned with the matters of Disciples of Christ and the ecumenical movement. It is all the more appropriate that this particular issue contains an excellent survey of Disciples history and an evaluation of this religious movement by Mr. West.

For West's book is, in every sense of the word, "timely." It recovers for us an appreciative portrait of an exceedingly important early leader in the movement which was to become known as the Disciples of Christ. The book is a welcome one, therefore, because it comes at a time when the historical backgrounds of the Disciples are being investigated anew and because it sets in better perspective the truly great career and influence of one who has been obscured in our history by the emphasis on Alexander Campbell and the latter's place in the developing movement.

Mr. West takes us through Stone's career, his thinking, his passion for unity and his work for unity, in a book that is excellent in every way. We see the young Stone as he early despaired of conversion in a Calvinist sense, as he discovered with joy the simple truth of the love of God, as he entered the ministry, already conditioned for the later break with the Presbyterian Church by liberal religious ideas and a reaction to the Calvinist system of theology. The story shifts to Kentucky, and we follow the young minister through his eventual break with Presbyterianism and his career in the movement which grew around him.

In chapters which contain important new material and insights Dr. West traces the development of Stone's religious thinking, his passion and work for Christian unity, especially with regard to the "Reformers" of the Campbell movement. If the matter had been left entirely in the hands of the "Sage of Bethany," Dr. West points out clearly, the two streams might never have come together. It was Stone's patience, his courtesy, his never-failing dream of unity, which finally, in spite of Mr. Campbell, brought together these two American religious movements into one, and so insured that the Disciples of Christ would not, in the main, harden into a legalistic denomination calling for unity only on its own terms.

In these latter chapters the full stature of Stone's greatness can be seen.

For him unity of Christians was the "polar star" (as he himself says) for his whole life. He dreamed of a great gathering of all Christians to discuss and work for unity. He was willing to allow for theological viewpoints, as long as others were not forced to accept them and as long as all came together on the simple basis of the love which should unite all Christians in Christ. I think that, at this point, the ecumenical movement today still has to "catch up" with Stone!

West depicts the patient, but futile, efforts of Stone to bring together the Disciples and the Christian Connection movement. In his final two chapters the author gives an evaluation of this early nineteenth century preacher and religious leader which points up Stone's very real influence in the history of the ecumenical dream. The influence is, of course, best indicated in the merger of the Campbell Reformers and Stone's Christians.

This is a book which ought to be read widely by Disciples and should not be ignored by any concerned with ecumenicity. It is a book which is well-written, thoroughly documented, and which gives an excellent bibliography. This reviewer would like to add another comment. It is too bad that the editors of *A History of the Ecumenical Movement* did not have access to West's book before they included the material on the Disciples of Christ. Stone's name is mentioned but once, and then simply as a figure in the history, in contrast to the attention given Alexander Campbell. More attention to Barton Stone would have produced a better perspective of the ecumenical spirit in Disciples history. In fact, one might almost argue that the *History* might well have been dedicated to Barton Warren Stone, who believed in and practiced Christian unity!—M. W. Jones.

Vernon Noble. *The Man in Leather Breeches: The Life and Times of George Fox.* New York: Philosophical Library, 1953. Illustrated. 298 pages. $6.00.

Here is the biography of George Fox written by a non-Friend. The book represents an attempt to interpret Quakerism by looking once again at its great founder. The edition is a colorful and adventurous story of "The Man in Leather Breeches," who was a prophet and an organizer of significant ability.

The author has been chiefly concerned with Mr. Fox, his behavior, his adventures, and with the people who assisted him. Mr. Noble avowed intention to avoid the theological problem of the inner light since this has been done by Quaker writers themselves.

Those interested in life history that reads like fictional adventure will be quick to seize the privilege of reading the story of one of the most remarkable characters of the seventeenth century. The part that George Fox played in securing freedom of speech and religious worship is coming to be more fully recognized by such attempts as Vernon Noble has made in this new assessment.

Mr. Noble, who is now on the staff of the British Broadcasting Corporation, was given access to Quaker historical sources at Friends House, London, and in the provinces. For those who have only a vague notion of the life and contribution of George Fox this book will be found to supply a living recollection of a great Christian prophet.—F. J. Albert.

Edwin W. Smith. *The Life and Times of Daniel Lindley (1801-80): Missionary to the Zulus.* London: Epworth Press, 1949. xxx+456 pages. 15 shillings.

How many readers were aware:

1. That the first man to plough a few acres in the Transvaal was an American missionary?

2. That the first white woman to die in the Transvaal was an American missionary?

3. That the first Commission appointed by th British government to locate the Zulus (100,000 of them) in Natal included two American missionaries among its five members?

4. That the first American Missionary Society (the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions) recruited Presbyterian as well as Congregational missionaries for over sixty years?

Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Lindley were among the six married couples sent out to South Africa as pioneer missionaries of the American Board in December, 1834. Three couples, including the Lindleys, attempted, five years before Livingstone reached Africa, to open a more northerly station than Moffat's at Kuruman. A clash between the Dutch Boers and the native tribes led to the abandonment of the mission and ultimately Lindley's party joined the other American group in Natal in the hope of converting the Zulus. Most of the rest of his life was devoted by Lindley to that task. As an American whose grandfather had moved from New Jersey to the opening Western Pennsylvania and whose father was one of the early pioneers into Ohio, and as one whose seminary education was in Virginia and whose early ministry was given to North Carolina—to Negroes as well as whites—Lindley was unusually prepared to face the msisionary problems arising from the rivalries of Dutch and British in Natal and from the large displacement of the African tribes by both white groups.

The modern 'apartheid' policy in South Africa is attracting the attention—mostly unfavorable—of the United Nations. This book by Edwin Smith, the author of numerous works on African peoples, provides a thrilling account of the early years of the white occupation, and helps the reader to understand the present day situation.—A. C. WATTERS.